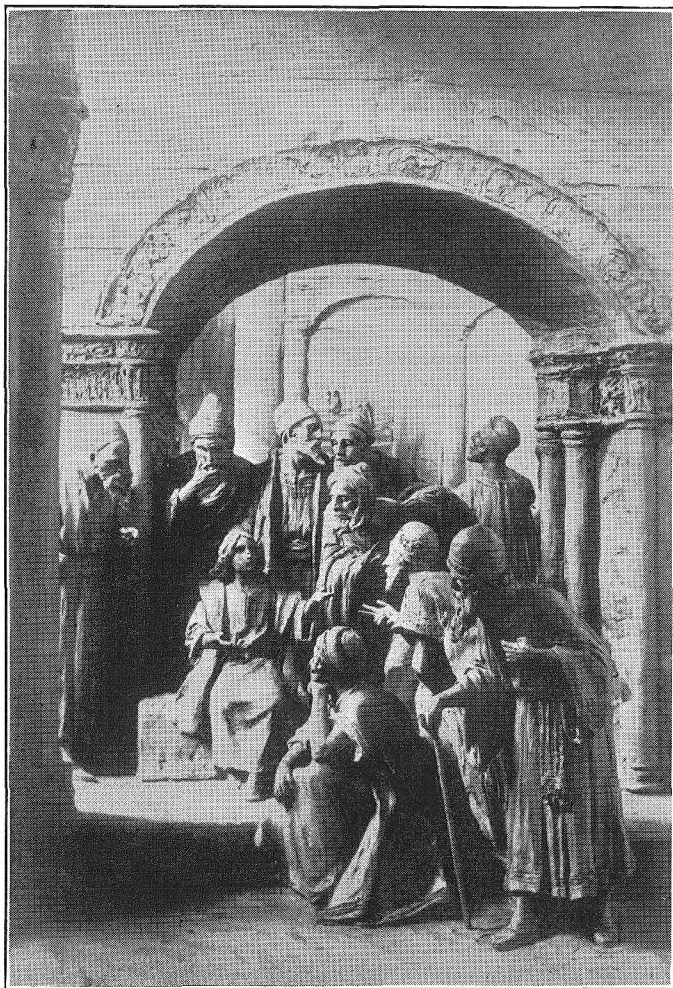


**PRACTICE OF PERFECTION
AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**



CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

227
**PRACTICE OF PERFECTION
AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**

By

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

of the Society of Jesus

Newly Translated from the Original Spanish

By

JOSEPH RICKABY

of the Same Society

**IN THREE VOLUMES
VOLUME I**

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LIFE OF ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ*

Alphonsus Rodriguez was born at Valladolid in the year 1526, and in the twentieth year of his age he renounced the world to consecrate himself to God in the Society of Jesus at Salamanca. After having been engaged about thirteen years in teaching moral theology at Monterey, he was sent to Montille, in the province of Andalusia, to be there master of novices, and to deliver such spiritual exhortations as are delivered weekly in the houses of the Society. In these two employments he acquitted himself for thirty years together with all possible zeal and ability, and hereby evinced how skilled he was in the science of saints and in the direction of souls.

Being afterwards chosen to go to Rome, to the Fifth General Congregation, he there also gave marks of exemplary virtue and consummate prudence. At his return he was sent to Cordova, where for twelve years he had the direction of spiritual things, that is to say, the care of taking an account of the interior state of all the religious in the house, to help them to overcome and root out of their souls whatever opposed their advancement in perfection. As at Montille, so at Cordova his office was to make the weekly exhortations; and it was towards the end of the twelve years he remained here that, collecting together what he had written on various subjects, he compiled these volumes of the **PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**. He did not, however, publish them until a long time after, when he went to the Provincial Congregation held at Seville in the year 1606, where he was ordered to stay to take care of the novices and at the same time to publish this his work.

*Taken from the American edition of 1839.

After having applied himself for eight years together, without any relaxation, to the discharge of both these duties, he became so infirm that he had neither force to exercise any longer the painful function of master of novices, nor even to celebrate the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Lest, however, he should be deprived of the precious body of Jesus Christ, he daily received it from the hand of another; and, having lived two years in this languishing condition, at length upon the twenty-first of February in the year 1616, in a good old age, full of merits, he happily rested in our Lord, in peace. His death was not less universally regretted than his sanctity was esteemed. He was a great lover of retirement, an exact observer of rules, and had a very great zeal for the salvation of souls. His self-abnegation was such that in all things he had but God in view. The time in which he was not engaged in the discharge of other indispensable duties, he spent in prayer and spiritual reading, adding to these pious exercises very frequent austerities, which he continued to the end of his life; and when it was once represented to him that he could not practise such penances without shortening his days, he answered: "An unmortified religious man is already dead."

Behold in short the life of this most excellent master of a spiritual life; but the reading of his works will still give you a better knowledge of him, for there was nothing he proposed to others to practise, of which he gave not first an example in himself, his life being nothing else than a constant practice of what in his writings he had taught others.

THE AUTHOR

to the

RELIGIOUS OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS*

St. Gregory, being desirous to write some spiritual instructions for the conduct of certain religious houses, excuses himself in his Sixth Book and Twenty-seventh Epistle in these terms. "The exercises of mortification and prayer practised by religious produce such a source or fountain of wisdom in their hearts that they stand not in need of being watered with those few drops our aridity is able to impart to them. For, as the fountain in the midst of the terrestrial Paradise watered all parts thereof and kept it continually fresh and green without the help of rain, which it needed not, so those who are in the paradise of religion have no need of being watered from without, because prayer and mortification produce in them such a source or fountain of grace as is always sufficient to maintain their virtues in their full splendor and beauty."

I might, Reverend Fathers, upon this account, with far more reason than St. Gregory, excuse myself after the same manner he did to those faithful souls our Lord has planted in the garden of the Society of Jesus—souls He has cultivated and watered by the help of that mental prayer they daily make. But though this excuse would doubtless be a very just one if I imagined you expected anything new from me, yet I am prevented from making it, as I propose to myself nothing else in this work than to revive in your memories what you already know and daily practise. In

*Taken from the American edition of 1839.

doing this, I shall pay obedience to our holy founder, who in one of his constitutions ordains that "once a week, or at least once a fortnight, there shall be one appointed to lay before our eyes the obligations of a spiritual life, lest human frailty, which daily inclines us to relax in our duties, might cause us to forget, and to discontinue them." This constitution, God be praised, is exactly observed throughout the whole Society, and produces great fruit therein. Having, therefore, above these forty years been employed in the function of exhorting the novices or other religious, and having gathered divers things together for this purpose, my superiors and many other persons to whom I owe a deference were of opinion that I might render great service to God and to religion, and that the advantage drawn from my labors would be more lasting, if I should take care to review and put in order what I had already composed.

I considered, also, that in the constitution before cited, St. Ignatius puts this alternative:—"Let there be," says he, "one appointed to deliver these spiritual exhortations to the religious, or at least let the religious be obliged to read them." I was still more encouraged in my undertaking when I reflected that it is a practice established in the Society and very much recommended by saints, to read something every day that may promote our spiritual advancement. This being the principal design of the following work, I have for this reason laid before you, as clearly and briefly as I was able, such things as are more essential and more common to our profession. These, I trust, will serve as a mirror wherein, if we daily view ourselves, we shall be enabled to correct our imperfections and decorate our souls in such manner as will render them most pleasing to the eyes of His Divine Majesty.

Moreover, though my principal intention was to fulfil the particular obligation I have to serve those whom religion has constituted my fathers and brethren in Jesus Christ;

yet because we ought to extend as far as we can the effects of charity, and being particularly obliged to it by our institute, I have endeavored to dispose this work after such a manner as that it may be useful not only to our Society in particular, but to all other religious, and even to all persons in general who aspire to Christian perfection. Wherefore, that the title may correspond to the work, I have entitled it PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES. I call it *Practice* because things are treated in it after such a manner as may render the practice very easy.

I hope by the mercy of our Lord that my labors will not be unprofitable; and that this grain of seed of the word of God, being sown in the good soil of souls aspiring to perfection, will render not only thirty or sixty, but even a hundred, fold.

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FIRST TREATISE

ON THE ESTEEM OF SPIRITUAL THINGS



CHAPTER I

The Great Value We Ought to Set on Spiritual Things

I WISHED, says the Wise Man, *and there was given me sense; I asked it of God, and there came upon me the spirit of wisdom; and I preferred her before thrones and royal scepters; and I made no account of riches in comparison therewith, nor of precious stones; for all gold in comparison with it is as a little sand, and silver shall be counted as clay before it* (Wisdom vii. 7). The true wisdom on which we ought to set our eyes is perfection, which consists in union with God by love, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Above all I commend to you charity, which is the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14), and joins and unites us with God. Now the esteem which Solomon says here he had of wisdom, we ought to have of perfection and of all that makes thereto. In comparison with that, all should appear to us as a little sand, a little clay and ordure, as the same Apostle said: *I count all things as ordure and refuse in view of gaining Christ* (Phil. iii. 8). This is a main means for gaining perfection: at the rate in which that esteem grows in our hearts, at the same will our perfection grow, and the whole house and the whole order. The reason is that such as is the value that we set upon a thing, such is the desire that we have of obtaining it; for the will is a blind power and follows what the understanding dictates and proposes to it: and according to the esteem and value that the understanding sets on a thing, so also is the will and desire to obtain it. And as the will is queen and commands all the other powers and energies of the soul, as well interior as exterior, it follows that according to the will and desire that we have of a thing, will be our contriving and taking means thereto and our

efforts to obtain it. Thus it is very important to have a great esteem and appreciation of spiritual things and of what appertains to our spiritual progress, that so the will and desire of them may be great, and great also our effort to procure and gain them, for in all these things like goes with like.

A dealer in precious stones has need to know and form a right estimate of their value under pain of being deceived, for in default of such knowledge and such estimate he will exchange and sell a stone of great value for a thing of very little worth. Our trade is in precious stones and pearls. *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant seeking in precious stones* (Matt. xiii. 45). We are merchants of the kingdom of heaven; we must know and form a right estimate of the price and value of the merchandise in which we deal, that we be not deceived, changing gold for clay and heaven for earth, which would be a huge mistake. And so says the Prophet Jeremy: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength, nor the rich man in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, in knowing and understanding me* (Jerem. ix. 23). This is the greatest of all treasures, knowing and loving and serving God, and this is the greatest business we can have on hand; or, rather, we have no other business than this; for this we were created and for this we entered religion: this is our end, our terminus, and our glory.

Would that this esteem and appreciation of perfection and of spiritual things appertaining thereto were deeply imprinted in the hearts of all, especially in religious, and that we helped one another and roused one another to this, not in words alone, after treating of it in our ordinary talks and conversations, but much more by the example of our deeds; that from them the beginner and the proficient and all might come to see that what counts in religion is spiritual things, much humility, much obedience, much

devotion to recollection and prayer; not much learning, nor much fine preaching, nor any endowment of natural and human gifts—so says our blessed Father Ignatius in his Constitutions (*Reg. 16. Sum.*). And it is necessary for all to understand this from the beginning and be nurtured on this milk, to the end that each one forthwith may set before his eyes and his heart that the thing to do is not to turn out a great scholar or a great preacher, but to become very humble and very mortified, since that it is which here in religion is esteemed and made much account of. That fact it is which they come upon and get to see, who have their eyes open to take a right view of things. These humble and mortified men are they who are sought after and held in high esteem by all. Not that we mean to say that we should give ourselves to virtue in order to be sought after and esteemed. But seeing that this it is which is esteemed and made much of in religion, everyone should bethink himself and come to say: "Doubtless this is the better thing, this it is that befits me, this is the right way; I mean simply to give myself to virtue and sincerely aim at my own spiritual progress, for all the rest without that is vanity."

Hence it will be understood what harm they may do who in their ordinary talk and conversation make it their whole business to discuss genius, abilities, and talents, and rate this man and that man accordingly. The consequence is that the younger members of the community, hearing this language of their elders, think that this it is that is current coin here and is valued, and this is the means they must take to thrive and grow to importance and be regarded. So they set their eyes upon this; and while the desire and esteem of learning, ability, and genius grows upon them, their desire and esteem of virtue, humility, and mortification decreases in proportion. So they come to make little account of the one in comparison with the other and choose to come short of virtue rather than of learning. Hereby

many come to fall off and even afterwards to lose their vocation altogether. Better would it have been to have spoken to them of the importance and necessity of virtue and humility and how little learning and ability are worth—or, to say better, how harmful they are without virtue—instead of engendering in them by such conversations the desire of honor and of making a figure in the world, and being held for men of genius and great talents, which is apt to be their first step to perdition.

Surius, in his *Life of St. Fulgentius the Abbot*, supplies a very good example to this purpose. He says that, when this holy prelate saw any of his religious to be great workers, never ceasing all day long to serve and help the house, but saw on the other hand some not so diligent in spiritual things nor so interested in prayer, spiritual reading, and recollection, he had no great liking or esteem of them, and did not think they deserved it. But when he saw anyone much attached to spiritual things and very careful to make progress in them, although unable to do any work in the house or be of any service because of his weak and sickly condition, he had a particular love and esteem for such; and rightly so, for to what purpose is the possession of great parts and talents if the man is not obedient and submissive and the superior cannot do with him what he wills? Especially if he then takes occasion to take back a little of his free and easy ways and look for exemptions, much better in that case he had never had those abilities and talents at all. If the superior had to give an account to God whether he had in his house people who were good workers and of great parts, that would stand: but it is not so; it is not of that that he has to give an account, but of the care that he takes to get his subjects to advance in spirit and go on every day growing in virtue; and how, according to the abilities and talents which our Lord gives to each one, they busy themselves about their ministries and offices, not losing for that anything of their spiritual

improvements. And of that same thing God will ask account of the subject. Certainly, says a holy man: "In the day of judgment we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; nor how well we spoke, but how virtuously we lived."

Christ our Redeemer had sent His disciples to preach, and they returned very satisfied and pleased with themselves, saying: *Lord, we have done marvels and miracles: even the devils were subject and obeyed us in Thy name.* The Redeemer of the world answered: *Put not your satisfaction and joy in this, that ye do marvels and miracles and command the devils, and they obey you; but rejoice and be glad that your names are written in heaven* (Luke x. 20). We should put our satisfaction and joy in acquiring and gaining the kingdom of heaven, for without this all the rest will profit us nothing. *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26). Now if we say this, and Christ says the same, of the spiritual occupations and ministries of gaining and converting souls, that not on that account should we forget ourselves, because in that case it would profit us nothing though we converted the whole world, what is to be said of other occupations? It is not the right thing for a religious to be so absorbed and engrossed in studies or let himself be so carried away by external occupations as to forget his own spiritual progress, his meditation, his examen of conscience, his practice of mortification and penance; and to put spiritual things in the last place and take the worst time for them; and if anything has to be left out, to let *them* be the things left out is to live quite an unspiritual life, and not as a religious.

St. Dorotheus relates that he had for infirmarian and disciple, Dositheus, who was very diligent in his office, took great care of the sick, had their beds well made and their rooms in good order, all very clean and neat. St. Dorotheus went to visit the infirmary, and Dositheus said to

him: "Father, there comes over me a thought of vainglory, saying to me: 'How well you keep everything! How pleased your superior will be with you!'" St. Dorotheus gave him an answer that quite cleared him of vainglory: "You have turned out a very knacky man, Dositheus, a very good infirmarian you have turned out, but you have not turned out a good religious." Let each one, then, take care that this may not be said of him: "You have turned out a very good infirmarian, or a very good porter, but you have not turned out a good religious; you have turned out a very good student, or a very good university man, or a very good preacher, but not a good religious." We have not come here for that, but to be good religious. That is what we ought to esteem and secure and keep ever before our eyes; and all other things we should take as accessories and additions to our spiritual progress, according to those words of Christ: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these other things shall be added unto you* (Matt. vi. 33).

Of those Fathers of the Desert we read that, since they could not be always reading, or meditating and praying, they spent their spare time in making baskets and in other manual works so as not to be idle, and some of them at the end of the year set fire to all that they had made, because they were not in need thereof for their support, but they worked only to occupy the time and not be idle. So we ought to fix our eyes principally upon our own spiritual progress, and as for other businesses and occupations, though they be with our neighbor, we ought to take to them as those holy Fathers took to making their baskets; not for that should we forget ourselves or neglect ourselves or lose on that account one point of perfection.

So we should always proceed on this foundation and hold it for a first principle, always to put in the first place the spiritual exercises which touch our own advancement, and never leave them off for anything, because this it is

that must preserve and carry us forward in virtue; failing this, we shall soon see the falling off that will result. And we have abundant experience that, when we are not getting on as we ought, this always comes from our having grown slack in our spiritual exercises. *My heart hath withered, because I have forgotten to eat my bread* (Psalm ci. 5). If the upkeep and sustenance of our soul fails us, it is clear that we must become weak and languid. And so our holy Father much commends this to us and warns us of it many times. One time he says: "The aim of all those under probation, and of all others, ought to be what makes for their self-abnegation and their increase in virtue and perfection." Another time he says: "Let all give due time to spiritual things and try to increase their devotion so far as the grace of God shall impart it to them." Another time: "Let all give the appointed time to prayer, meditation, and reading, with all diligence in the Lord." And notice the phrase "with all diligence."

Hence it will be seen that, however many occupations of obedience and official duty one has, it is not the mind of superiors that on that account we should omit our spiritual duties, for there is no superior that wishes you to break your rules, and rules of such leading importance as these. So let no one endeavor to color and gloss over his imperfection and negligence in his spiritual exercises by a vest and cloak of obedience, saying: "I could not make my meditation, or examen, or spiritual reading, because obedience took me off." It is not obedience that stands in the way here, but the negligence of the individual and the little affection that he has for spiritual things. St. Basil says that we should take care to be very faithful in giving to God all the times that we have marked for prayer and spiritual exercises; and if at any time by some unavoidable occupation we are not able to make meditation or examen at the due time, we must remain with hunger and desire to supply and make it up forthwith as soon as we can. So

when we miss our bodily allowance of food or of necessary sleep, for having been all night with an invalid, hearing his confession or helping him to die well, we take care to supply it forthwith and never fail to find time for that. This is the will of superiors when they occupy one of us in the time of his spiritual exercises, as is sometimes necessary; they do not mean us to omit them, but to put them off and make them up afterwards very completely, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *Be not hindered from praying always* (Eccles. xviii. 22). He does not say, *Do not hinder*, but *Be not hindered*. Let there be no hindrance or distraction to prevent you from ever holding fast to your prayer; and for the good religious there never is such hindrance because he always finds time to make it up and repair it. It is told of St. Dorotheus that, being guest-master and getting to bed very late, and sometimes rising in the night to give welcome to visitors, nevertheless he rose with the rest for prayer, and had asked someone to call him because the ordinary caller did not do so, knowing how he had been busied—and this though he was not yet quite recovered from a fever. This was desiring in good earnest not to fail in his spiritual duties, and not acquiescing in any excuse so as afterwards to go about out of sorts all day long. The same history tells also of a holy old man who saw an angel incensing all those who had gone with diligence to prayer, and also the vacant places of those who were not there for being hindered by obedience, but not of those who were absent through their own negligence. This is a great consolation for those whom the occupations of obedience prevent from coming up to time with the rest for spiritual duties, and a warning not to fail in them through our own negligence.

CHAPTER II

*Of the Affection and Desire that We Should Have for
Virtue and Perfection*

BLESSED are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill (Matt. v. 6). Justice is the particular name of one of the four cardinal virtues, distinct from the others, but it is also a common name for all virtue and holiness. We call a good and virtuous life, *justice* (*righteousness*), and the holy and virtuous, *just* (*righteous*). The Wise Man says: *The justice of the righteous shall deliver them* (Prov. xi. 6): that is to say, their holy life shall deliver them; and so the name is used in many passages of Scripture. *Unless your justice be greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 20). So says Christ our Redeemer, meaning, "unless your virtue, religion, and holiness be greater." In the same manner is to be understood what Christ likewise said to St. John the Baptist when the latter made a difficulty of baptizing Him. *Thus it behooves us to fulfil all justice* (Matt. iii. 15), i. e., to give an example of obedience, humility, and all perfection. So, too, is the word to be taken in the phrase before us: "Blessed are they who have such a desire and affection for virtue and perfection that they are positively hungry and athirst after it, for they shall have their fill;" they shall gain it. And this is one of the eight beatitudes which He taught us and preached in that sovereign Sermon on the Mount. St. Jerome on these words says: "It is not enough for us to have a mind for justice, unless we suffer a downright hunger for justice"—*Non nobis sufficit velle iustitiam nisi iustitiae patiamur famem*. It is not enough to have some sort of desire of virtue and perfection; we must needs have a hunger and thirst after it so that we can say with the prophet: *As the hart, wounded and hard-pressed by the*

hunters, thirsteth after the fountains of waters, so doth my soul desire thee, O God (Psalm xli. 1).

This is a thing of so great importance that, as we were saying in the last chapter, on it depends all our spiritual proficiency; and it is the beginning and only means of attaining to perfection, according to the saying of the Wise Man (Wisdom vi. 16): *The first thing necessary to gain wisdom*—which is the knowledge and love of God wherein our perfection consists—*is a true and heartfelt desire of it*; and the reason thereof is that, as philosophers say, in all things, and particularly in moral matters, the love and desire of the end is the first cause that moves and sets all the rest to work. Thus the greater the love and desire of the end, the greater the care and diligence that are employed to gain it. Thus it is very important that the desire and affection for virtue and perfection be great, since the care and diligence in securing and gaining it will be great in proportion.

So important and necessary is it that there should be in us this desire—springing from the heart and drawing us after it, without there being need of others going to look after us—that, where the desire of advancement in perfection is not found, there will be very little hope. Let us take an example in the case of a religious, and everyone will be able to apply the doctrine to himself according to his state. The care and vigilance of superiors over their subjects is good and necessary in religion, and necessary also are rebuke and penance; but when a man does things for this motive, there is not much trust to be put in him, because this motive at most may secure his going on well for some time while they are looking after him; but if this good behavior does not spring from the heart, from a true desire of his spiritual advancement, not much account is to be taken of it, for it cannot last.

This is the difference there is between things that move by a violent motion and things that move by a natural

motion; those that move by violent motions—a motion proceeding from an external force and impression—the farther they go on, the weaker and feebler their course, as when you throw a stone up; but in things that move by a natural motion, as when a stone falls towards its center (the earth), the contrary is the case; the farther they go, the more lightly and rapidly they go. This is also the difference between those who do things for fear of penances and scoldings, or because people are looking at them, or for other human considerations, and those who are moved by love of virtue and pure desire of pleasing God. The good behavior of the former lasts only while the scolding continues and an eye is kept upon them; as soon as that is over, down they go. St. Gregory tells of his aunt Gordiana that, when her two sisters, Tharsilla and Aemiliana, rebuked her for frivolous conversation and for not observing the gravity which became the religious habit that she wore, she showed a serious countenance while they were rebuking her and seemed to take it well; but when the hour of rebuke and castigation was over, she lost all that seriousness which she had put on and wasted her time in the company of the secular young ladies who lived in the monastery. She was like a bow strung with a thick cord; as the cord relaxes, so also the bow relaxes and returns to its first position. Her serious demeanor, not coming from the heart, but being a thing put on, could not last.

This business of perfection is not strained; it is not a thing to be done on compulsion; it must come from the heart. So Christ our Redeemer said to that young man in the Gospel: *If thou wilt be perfect* (Matt. xix. 21). But if you do not will it, all the contrivances and methods that superiors can apply will never suffice to make you perfect. This is the solution and answer to the question which St. Bonaventure raises: How is it that in former times one superior sufficed for a thousand monks, and for three thousand, and five thousand (for so St. Jerome and St. Augus-

tine say there used to be under one superior) ; and now one superior is not enough for ten monks and even less? The reason is that those monks of old had in their hearts a lively and ardent desire of perfection, and the fire that burned within made them greatly to take to heart their own advancement and press on their way with great fervor.

The just shall shine, and fly here and there like sparks in a bed of reeds (Wisdom iii. 7). By this metaphor the Holy Spirit aptly declares to us the swiftness and readiness wherewith the just travel on the road of virtue when this fire has caught on in their hearts. See with what swiftness and readiness the flame runs on in a dry reed-bed when it takes fire. In this way the just run on in the way of virtue when they are kindled and aglow with this divine fire. Such were those monks of old, and therefore they had no need of a superior to urge them on, but rather to govern them in their fervor. But in the absence of this desire, not only will one superior not suffice for ten monks, but ten superiors will not suffice for one monk nor be able to make him perfect if he does not want it. This is clear. For what is the use of visiting him at meditation? Can he not do as he likes as soon as the visitor has passed? And while he is there on his knees, he may be thinking of his studies, and of his business, and of other irrelevant things. And when he goes to give an account of conscience, can he not say what he likes and be silent about what is most to the point, and say he is getting on well when he is not getting on well, but badly? How idle it all is if he has no wish and no earnest desire!

Here comes in well the answer that St. Thomas Aquinas gave to a sister of his who once asked him how she might save her soul. He answered: "By willing it." If you will, you will be saved; if you will, you will improve; if you will, you will be perfect. This is the whole knot of the difficulty, that you should will and desire in sober earnest and your desire should spring from your heart, since God on His

part is quite ready to help us. If this willing on your part is not done, all that superiors can do will be in vain. You are the person who must take to heart your own improvement, because that is your business, and on you it depends and on no one else, and for that you have come into religion. Let each one, then, make up his mind that on what day soever he relents on this point, and forgets himself and what regards his spiritual progress, and takes no further care to insure his spiritual duties' being well done, and keeps not up any ardent desire of improving and going forward in virtue and mortification, on that day he has missed his business. And so our Father, at the beginning of his Constitutions and Rules, lays down this foundation: "It is the interior law of charity and love which the Holy Ghost writes and imprints on hearts, that must preserve, guide, and advance us in the way of His divine service that we have entered upon." This fire of the love of God, this desire of His greater honor and glory, it is that must ever be exciting us to mount and go forward in virtue. When this desire really exists in the heart, it makes us diligent and careful to obtain what we desire, since our inclination is very industrious to seek and find what we desire, and means are never wanting thereto. Therefore the Wise Man says: *The first thing for gaining wisdom is a true and hearty desire thereof* (Wisdom vi. 18).

And, further, this virtue coming from the heart carries with it another advantage, which makes it so effectual as a means; it is that it renders things easy and sweet, however difficult they be in themselves. Else tell me, how came it to be so easy for you to leave the world and enter religion, except that it came from your heart to do so? The Lord gave you a strong will and affection for it; that was the grace of your vocation. He rid you of affection for the things of the world and set your affection on the things of religion, and with that He made it easy for you. And how comes this to be so difficult to those who remain there in the

world? Because God has not given them this will and affection which He has given you; God "has not called them," as they say, nor done them this favor of the grace of a vocation. Now as to enter religion, God made the way easy for you by giving you a will and a great desire of it, so that not your parents and relations nor all the world besides were able to withdraw you from it; so also to make progress in religion and make its practices easy to you, it is necessary to continue that will and desire wherewith you first came to it. While that desire lasts, its practices will be easy to you; but when it drops, everything will be difficult and up-hill. That is why we find ourselves at times so heavy and lumpish and at other times so light and sprightly; let no one throw the fault on circumstances, nor on superiors, but on his own want of virtue and mortification. Father Master Avila says: "A healthy and strong man easily lifts a two-stone weight; but a sickly person or a child cries, 'Oh, dear, how heavy!'" That is the cause of our difficulty. Things are the same as they were: at another time they were easy to us, and we never boggled about them; the fault is in ourselves, that whereas we ought to be men and have grown in perfection, *in virum perfectum* (Eph. iv. 13), we are children in virtue; we have grown weak and slack in that desire of progress with which we entered religion.

CHAPTER III

*That an Excellent Means and a Very Great Preparation
to Receive Favors from the Lord Is to Keep Up a
Great Desire of Spiritual Improvement*

IT is every important to keep up this desire and this hunger and thirst after our spiritual improvement, since it is one of the chief means and best dispositions that we can have on our part for the Lord to give us the virtue and perfection that we desire. So St. Ambrose says that when a man has a great desire of his improvement and growth in

virtue and perfection, God is so pleased therewith that He enriches and fills him with bounties and rewards; and he applies to this effect that which the most holy Virgin said in her canticle: *He hath filled the hungry with good things* (Luke i. 53); and the prophet in the psalm had said the same: *He hath satisfied the thirsty soul, and the hungry soul he hath sated with good things* (Psalm cvi. 9). Those that have such a strong desire of virtue and perfection as to hunger and thirst after the same, the Lord enriches with spiritual gifts because He takes great pleasure in the good desire of our heart. The angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel and told him that his prayers had been heard from the beginning, *because thou art a man of desires* (Dan. ix. 23). And to King David God confirmed the promise of the kingdom to go down to his descendants for the will and desire he had to build a house and temple unto the Lord—although He would not have him do so, but left it to his son Solomon. Nevertheless, He was well pleased with this desire and rewarded it as if he had put it in execution. And of Zach-eus the holy Gospel says that he desired to see Jesus, and was seen first by Jesus, and He invited Himself and entered in by the gates of his house (Luke xix. 5).

Solomon in the sixth chapter of Wisdom enlarges on this point further. Speaking of Wisdom, which is God Himself, he says: *I easily let myself be seen by those who love me, and am found by those who seek me*. Do you know how easily? *She (Wisdom) herself goes before and anticipates them that desire her in earnest, to show herself first to them*. You have no sooner begun to desire than she is with you. *He that riseth early in the morning to seek her shall not have much labor in finding her*, going here and there, for on opening the door of his house *he shall find her sitting at his door* in expectation of his opening it (Wisdom vi. 13-15). The first object that he shall come across in opening will be this divine Wisdom, which is God Himself. Oh, bounty and infinite mercy of God! Not content

with going to seek us and knocking at our door time after time for us to open—*See I stand at the door and knock*, He says in the Apocalypse (iii. 20), and in the Canticles, *Open to me my sister* (v. 2)—not content with that, as though weary of knocking, God sits at our door, giving us to understand that He would have come in long ago had He not found the door locked. Nevertheless He goes not away, but sits down there, so that on opening you may come upon Him at once. Though you have been slow in opening your heart to God and answering His good inspiration, He, notwithstanding, has not gone away, but is much more eager to come in than that: there He is, sitting at the door, looking for you to open to Him. *The Lord waiteth to have mercy on you* (Isaias xxx. 18). Never does friend desire to enter into the house of his friend as God desires to enter into your heart. He is more eager to impart Himself to us and do us favors than we can be to receive them. He is waiting for us to desire it and have this hunger and thirst for it. *Let him that thirsteth come to me and drink* (John vii. 37). *To him that thirsteth, I will give of the water of the fountain of life gratis* (Apoc. xxi. 6). The Lord wishes us to have a great desire of virtue and perfection, so that, when He gives us any of it, we may know how to esteem and preserve it as something very precious; for what is but little desired is commonly made little account of when it is attained. One of the chief reasons why we thrive so little in virtue and lag so far behind in perfection, is that we have no hunger and thirst after it; we desire it so feebly and languidly that the desires we have seem rather dead than alive.

St. Bonaventure says that there are persons who have good purposes and desires and never succeed in overcoming themselves or doing any violence to themselves to put them in execution, according to that word of the Apostle: *To will attends upon me, but to fulfil I do not see my way* (Romans vii. 18). These in many cases are not true purposes or

desires, but velleities; you fain would will, but will you do not. *The sluggard willeth and willeth not*, says the Wise Man. *Desires are the death of the sluggard: his hands refuse to do any work: all day long he is yearning and desiring: it all goes in desires* (Prov. xiii. 4; xxi. 25). Father Master Avila compares such people to those who fancy in their dreams that they are doing great exploits, and when they awake from sleep find they do just the opposite, according to Isaias (xxix. 8): *The hungry man dreameth and eateth, but when he awaketh his soul is empty*. So these people at prayer fancy that they desire to suffer and be despised and made small account of; but when they go out from a prayer, and the occasion offers, their behavior is all to the contrary; the fact is, they were dreaming all the while and those were no true desires. Others liken them to figures of soldiers worked on embroidery that are always holding their swords over the enemy and never come to deliver the blow, according to that saying of the prophet: *Yea, a man passeth away like a shadow and apparition* (Psalm xxxviii. 7). So some pass all their lives in threatening without ever dealing a blow. The prophet Isaias likens them to the woman that is in the pains of childbirth and never succeeds in bringing the babe to light: *The children are come to the point of bringing forth, and there is no strength to bear them* (Isaias xxxvii. 3). St. Gregory on those words of St. Matthew: *Woe to them that are with child and are giving suck in those days* (xxxiv. 19), says: "Woe to them that have not brought to light the good desires that they have conceived," but have stifled within themselves the desires they had conceived, since never to bring our desires to the light of deeds is to stifle and slay them within the womb. Woe to them, for they pass all their life in desires, and death finds them without works; because hereafter not only shall the desires they had avail them naught, but they shall be chastised for not having carried into effect the good inspirations which the Lord

gave them: their own children must turn against them, as they would have stood for them had they brought them to light.

Absalom was hung up by his golden and handsome tresses; so death shall come to many, and they shall be left hung up with their good and golden purposes. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John in his Apocalypse (xii. 2) says that he saw a woman that was near her bringing forth, and hard by a huge dragon ready to devour the child new-born. That is what the devil aims at to the utmost of his power when the soul conceives some good purpose; and so it is necessary that we should try to the utmost of our power to make our desires such, and so effectual, that we may come to put them in practice. This, says St. Bernard, is what the Prophet Isaias meant to say in these words so pithy and short: *If ye seek, seek* (Isaias xxi. 12). He means: Be not slack, since true desires and purposes ought to be effectual and persevered in, and such as to make us endeavor, with solicitude and care, more and more to please God, according to that saying of the Prophet Micheas (vi. 8): *I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: truly it is to do judgment and love mercy, and to walk careful with thy God.* These fervent desires are what the Lord asks of us, to reward us and fill us with good things. Blessed are they who have this hunger and thirst after virtue and perfection, for they shall have their fill (Matt. v. 6); God will accomplish their desires. We read of St. Gertrude that the Lord said to her: "I have given to everyone of my faithful a tube and duct of gold wherewith to suck and draw from My deified heart as much as he shall desire"; the said tube and duct He explained as being a good will and desire.

CHAPTER IV

*That the More a Man Gives Himself to Spiritual Things,
the More Hunger and Desire He Has of Them*

THEY that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst (Ecclus. xxiv. 29), says the Holy Ghost, speaking of divine wisdom; and St. Gregory says that there is this difference between the pleasures of the body and those of the soul, that the former we desire with great impatience when we have them not, and when we have got them, we make but little account of them. There in the world a man desires the headship of a college or a professor's chair; on gaining it, he at once reckons nothing of it and sets his eyes on a bigger thing. Give him a canonry or an auditorship; no sooner is he installed than he is weary of it and begins to desire something higher, a place in the royal council, and after that a bishopric; nor even with that is he satisfied, but at once has his eye on a higher post, and reckons nothing of what he has gained nor finds any satisfaction therein.

But with spiritual things it is just the other way; when we have them not, then they disgust and nauseate us; but when we have them and possess them, then we value them more and desire them more, and all the more, the more we taste them. And the saint gives the reason of this difference: When we gain and hold temporal goods and gratifications, then we better appreciate their insufficiency and imperfection; and when we see that they afford us no full satisfaction, nor the content that we expected, we make light of what we have attained and remain athirst and desirous of something greater, thinking to find there the satisfaction that we desired; but we are much mistaken, for the same will be our condition after having gained this thing or the other. Nothing in this world will be able to fulfil our aspirations, as Christ our Redeemer said to the

Samaritan woman: *Everyone who drinketh of this water shall thirst again* (John iv. 13). You may drink again and again of the water that is here; a little way farther on you will thirst again. The water of the satisfactions and gratifications that the world affords cannot quench or slake our thirst; but spiritual good things and delights, when they are attained, are then loved and desired more, because then their worth and value are better known; and the more perfectly we possess them, the more we shall hunger and thirst after them.

When a man has had no experience of spiritual things, nor has ever begun to taste them, it is no wonder, says St. Gregory, that he does not desire them; for who can love and desire what he does not know and has had no experience of what it tastes like? So the Apostle St. Peter says: *If ye have tasted how sweet the Lord is* (I Peter ii. 3). And the prophet: *Taste and see how sweet the Lord is* (Psalm xxxiii. 9). When you have begun to taste God and spiritual things, you will find in them such sweetness and delight that you will lick your fingers over them. That is what the Wise Man says in these words: He that eats and drinks of me, the more he eats, the more shall he hunger after me; and the more he drinks, the more shall he thirst after me. The more you give yourself to spiritual things and to God, the more hunger and thirst after them shall you feel.

But, someone will say, how does this agree with what Christ said to the Samaritan woman? Here Christ says: *He that shall drink of the water that I will give, shall no more thirst* (John iv. 13). In that other place the Holy Ghost says by the mouth of the Wise Man that the more we drink, the more we shall thirst. How does the one text agree with the other? The saint's reply is that what Christ said to the Samaritan woman must be taken to mean that he who shall drink of the living water which He there promises shall no longer thirst after sensual and worldly

delights, since the sweetness of spiritual things and of God shall make them appear to him insipid. St. Gregory says: "As to one who has eaten honey all other things appear insipid, so when a man comes to taste of God and spiritual things, all the things of the world offend him and seem to him nauseous and sour"—*Sicut post gustum mellis omnia videntur insipida, ita gustato spiritu desipit omnis caro*. But what the Wise Man says in that other place—*They that eat of me shall still hunger and they that drink of me shall still thirst* (Ecclus. xxiv. 29)—is to be understood of those same spiritual things, meaning that the more one tastes of God and spiritual things, the more he will hunger and thirst after them, because he will better know their value and have better experience of their sweetness and deliciousness, and so will have more desire of them. Thus the saints reconcile these two passages.

But how make this agree with what Christ says in St. Matthew (v. 6): *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill*? Here He says that they who hunger and thirst after justice shall have their fill; that other passage from the Wise Man says that they who eat and drink thereof shall still hunger and still thirst; how are these two things compatible, to go on being still hungry and thirsty and to have their fill? To this there is a very good answer. This is the privilege and excellence of spiritual good things, that, while filling, they excite hunger, and while satisfying our heart, they excite thirst. It is a fulness attended with hunger and a hunger attended with fulness. This is the marvel, the dignity, and grandeur of these good things, that they satisfy and fill the heart, yet in such a manner that we always remain with hunger and thirst after them; and the more we go on tasting and eating and drinking of them, the more that hunger and thirst grows. But this hunger is not painful, but satisfying; and this thirst is not fatiguing or exhausting, but rather refreshing and causing in the heart a great satisfaction and joy.

In truth, fulness and satisfaction, perfect and complete, shall be in heaven, according to that word of the prophet: *Then, O Lord, thou wilt fill me completely*, and I shall be enraptured and satisfied, *when I shall see thee clearly in glory: then shall thy servants be inebriated with the abundance of the good things of thy house* (Psalm xvi. 15; xxxv. 9). But there in glory, says St. Bernard on these words, the sight of God will fill our souls in such a manner that we shall always remain hungry and thirsty. This glorious vision of God will never pall upon us; we shall feel ever a new joy in seeing and rejoicing in God, even as though that were our first day and our first hour in heaven. So St. John says in the Apocalypse that he saw the blessed standing before the throne of the Lamb with grand music and rejoicing; *and they sang as it were a new canticle* (Apoc. xiv. 3). This canticle and this divine manna will be ever new to us and will give us new relish, and we shall ever be in new wonderment, saying, *Manhu, what is this?* (Exod. xvi. 15). Such also are spiritual things on earth—inasmuch as they are a participation of those in heaven—that while they sate and satisfy and fill the heart, they do so in such a manner that we continue hungering and thirsting after them, a hunger and thirst that grows upon us; the more we give ourselves over to them and the more we taste and enjoy them, the more this very hunger is a repletion, and this very thirst is a great refreshment and satisfaction. All this should help us to have a high esteem and appreciation of spiritual things and such an inflamed desire and affection for them that, forgetting and despising all the things of the world, we come to say with St. Peter: *Lord, it is good for us to be here* (Matt. xvii. 4).

CHAPTER V

That a Desire of Growing and Going Forward in Self-Improvement Is a Great Sign of One's Being in the Grace of God

THERE is a consideration, very important and very consoling, that will be of much assistance in animating us to a great desire of self-improvement, a hunger and thirst after progress in virtue, and carefulness and solicitude to please the Lord daily more and more; it is that this is one of the greatest and surest signs of God's dwelling in the soul. So says St. Bernard: "There is no greater sign, no more certain evidence of the presence of God in a soul, than having a great desire of more virtue and more grace and perfection"—*Nullum omnino praesentiae Dei certius testimonium est quam desiderium gratiae amplioris*. And he proves it by what God says through the Wise Man: *He that eateth me shall have more hunger, and he that drinketh me shall have more thirst* (Ecclus. xxiv. 29). If you feel hunger and thirst for spiritual things, rejoice, for it is a great sign that God dwells in your soul. He it is that puts into you this hunger and excites in you this thirst; you have struck the vein of gold leading up to this divine treasure, since you follow it so well. And as the huntsman's dog goes feebly and lazily when he has not caught scent of the game; but when he has caught it he is excited to great activity, seeking the scent on this side and that, and never gives over till he finds the game, so he who has truly caught the odor of this divine sweetness runs in the odor of so precious an ointment. *Draw me, and we will run after thee in the odor of thine ointments* (Cant. i. 3). God, Who is within you, draws you after Him. But if you do not feel within yourself this hunger and thirst, fear lest perhaps God dwells not within your heart. This is the property of spiritual things and things of God, as St. Gregory

says, that when we have them not we desire them not and have no care at all about them.

The glorious St. Bernard says that he trembled and his hair stood on end when he considered what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Man: *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred* (Eccles. ix. 1). But if this reflection that we do not know whether we are in the grace of God or out of His grace, made holy men tremble who were as pillars of the Church, what effect should it have on us, who have reason for alarm for the many causes that we have given for it? *We have in ourselves the answer of death* (II Cor. i. 9). I know for certain that I have offended God, and I do not know for certain if I am pardoned: who will not tremble? Oh, how much would one give to get some pledge and security in a matter which touches him so nearly! Oh, if I knew that the Lord had pardoned my sins! Oh, if I knew that I was in the grace of God! But while it is true that in this life we cannot have infallible certainty of being in the grace and friendship of God without a particular revelation from Him, nevertheless we can form some conjectures which raise in us a moral probability thereof; and one of them, and a very chief one, is our being possessed with this hunger and thirst after spiritual progress and daily growth in virtue and perfection. And so this alone should suffice to move us ever to keep up this desire, in order to have so great a pledge and witness that we are in the grace and friendship of God, which is one of the greatest of consolations and satisfactions; aye, the greatest that in this life we can possibly have.

This is confirmed by what the Holy Ghost says in Proverbs iv. 18: *The way and path of the just and their manner of procedure is as the light of the sun that goeth forth in the morning and the further it goes, it goes growing and perfecting itself the more, until it arrives at the perfection of midday.* Thus the just, the farther they go, the farther

they advance in virtue. St. Bernard says: "The just never cries, 'Enough'." *Nunquam iustus arbitratur se comprehenderit, nunquam dicit 'satis est,' sed semper esurit sititque iustitiam, ita ut si semper viveret, semper quantum in se est iustior esse contenderet, semper de bono in bonum totis viribus conaretur.* Of such it is said: *They shall go from virtue to virtue* (Psalm lxxxiii. 8), ever aiming at going further until they arrive at the height of perfection. But the path of the slothful, the imperfect, and the evil is as the light of evening, which goes decreasing and growing darker till it comes to the darkness and gloom of midnight. *The way of the wicked is darksome; they see not where they are likely to fall* (Prov. iv. 19). They come to such blindness that they see not where they stumble, nor have any eye for the faults and imperfections which they commit and no remorse of conscience for falling into them. Rather, they often take that to be no sin which is a sin, and that to be a venial sin which perhaps is mortal; such are their mental confusion and blindness.

CHAPTER VI

Showing How Not to Advance Is to Go Back

It is the common opinion of the saints that in the way of God not to advance is to go back: *in via Dei non progredi regredi est.* This we will explain here, and it will serve us for a good motive for advancing in perfection; for who would wish to go back upon what he has begun, especially seeing that that would be going against the sentence of our Savior in the Gospel: *He that putteth his hand to the plough, entering on the way of perfection, and turneth back, is not fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke ix. 62). Words that should make us tremble! The blessed St. Augustine says: "We don't *go back* so far as we make efforts to *go forward*; once we begin to stop, back we roll. Thus, if we wish not to go back, we must ever push on and

endeavor to go forward"—*Ubi coepimus stare, descendimus: si volumus non redire, currendum est*. The same is said, almost in the same words, by St. Gregory, St. Chrysostom, Pope St. Leo, and many other saints, and they repeat it many times. St. Bernard pursues this theme at considerable length in two of his letters (254 and 341). He there addresses a lax and lazy religious who is satisfied with a common life and does not care to go further in his improvement, and argues with him in this manner: "You do not want to go forward? No. Then you want to turn back? Not that either. What, then, do you want? I want to stay as I am, neither better nor worse. Then you want what is impossible. For in this world there is nothing that can stay as it is; that is the attribute of God alone, *with whom there is no change, nor shadow of vicissitude*" (James i. 17). *O monache, non vis proficere? Non. Vis ergo deficere? Nihil minus. Hoc ergo vis quod esse non potest; quid enim stat in hoc saeculo?* All things in this world are in continual change. *The heavens and all things grow old, as a garment grows old; and as a vesture thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art ever the self-same, and thy years shall not fail* (Psalm ci. 27-28). And particularly is it true of man, as Job says, that he never remains in one frame of being nor in one state. *He fleeth like a shadow, and never remaineth in the same state* (Job xiv. 2).

"Even Christ," says St. Bernard, "while he let Himself be seen on earth and conversed with men, was He at a standstill? No. St. Luke says of Him that *as He went on growing in age, so He went on also growing in wisdom and grace before God and men* (Luke ii. 52)"; that is, He showed in effect greater signs of wisdom and holiness. The prophet says that He prepared Himself to run this way: *He exulted as a giant to run his way* (Psalm xviii. 6). If, then, we wish to abide with Christ, we must go at the pace that He took, says St. John. *Whoever professeth to abide*

in him, must walk as he walked (I John ii. 6). "But if, when Christ runs, you run not, but stand still, it is clear that you will get farther and farther away from Him, and remain far behind"—*Si illo currente tu gradum sistis, non Christo appropias, sed te magis elongas* (St. Bernard).

Jacob saw a ladder that reached from earth to heaven; and he saw on it angels, but none of them did he see sitting or standing still, but they either mounted up or went down: God alone was seated at the top of the ladder (Gen. xxviii. 12). This is to give us to understand, says St. Bernard, that in this life there is no intermediate way of virtue between mounting up and going down, between going forward and going backward, but by the very fact of a man's not going forward he goes backward. As when we work at the winch, the wheel flies back as soon as we stop it; so from the same moment you desist from going forward in virtue, you must of necessity go backward. Abbot Theodore puts the same thought in these terms, recounted by Cassian: "We must apply ourselves to the study of virtue without remissness, and seriously exercise ourselves in the practice of it, lest coming once to cease from growing better, we immediately begin to grow less perfect; for our souls cannot rest long in the same state, so as to grow neither better nor worse in virtue; for we lose what we do not gain, and whosoever flags in the desire of growing better will not be out of danger of falling away."

Still someone will say: "That is well said, and must be true, and so it will turn out, since saints say so; but all this has the appearance of talking in parables, figures, and enigmas; explain to us this parable" (Matt. xv. 15). That I will. The saints explain it at length. Cassian does so by an excellent comparison, which is also used by St. Gregory. As a man in midstream of a rushing river, if he tries to stop and does not labor to mount upstream, will run great risk of going with the current downstream, so they say it is with a man in the way of spiritual life. This way

is so upstream and so difficult to our nature corrupted by sin, that if a man does not labor and force himself to go on, he will be carried away downstream by the current of his passions. Anyone steering his bark with tide and current against him, if he ceases to use his arms and row to make his way, finds himself thrown a long way back. *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12). We need to go on continually using our arms and forcing our way against the current of our passions, otherwise we shall find ourselves decidedly deteriorated and thrown back.

St. Jerome and St. Chrysostom further declare this, along with another common doctrine of saints and theologians; and St. Thomas deals with it in speaking of the religious state (2a—2ae, q. 184, art. 5). St. Thomas says there that religious are in a state of perfection; not that they are perfect as soon as they are religious, but that they are bound to aspire and yearn after perfection; and whoever concerns himself not at all about being perfect, he says that he is a religious in pretence only, since he does not that for which he came into religion. I do not here go into the question whether a religious would sin mortally who should say: "I am satisfied with keeping the commandments of God and my essential vows; but as for those rules that do not bind under sin, I have no mind to observe them." On this point doctors speak differently. Some say that he would sin mortally; others say that it would not be a mortal sin unless there entered into it some sort of contempt. But what is certain and what all agree in is this, that a religious with that will and purpose would be a bad religious, a scandal, and an ill example, and that, morally speaking, he would be in great danger of falling into mortal sins; for *he that despiseth and maketh small account of small things, little by little will come to fall into great sins* (Ecclus. xix. 1). This is quite enough for our purpose, since it is a clear case of going back.

For the better understanding of this point, St. Chrysostom alleges some homely examples. If you had a slave, he says, who was neither thief, nor gamester, nor drunkard, but faithful and temperate and clear of all vice, who sat all day in the house doing none of the things that belonged to his duty, who doubts but that he would deserve to be severely chastised, though there were nothing else bad about him, because it is bad enough not to do one's duty. Again, if a laborer were a good man in all other respects, but simply folded his arms, and had no mind to sow or plough, or dress vines, that would be clear matter of rebuke, though he did no other harm, since we judge it bad enough for a man not to do what his duty demands. Further, in your own body, if you had a hand that did you no harm, but was idle and useless and served not the other members of the body, would you not reckon that evil enough?

In the same way in spiritual things the religious who here in religion stands idle with his arms folded, without going forward or troubling himself about perfection or making any advance in virtue, deserves a severe reprimand for not doing what is proper to his office and condition. His very not doing good is doing evil. His very not advancing is going back, since he fails in the duty of his profession. What worse thing could you look for in a piece of land than its being barren and bearing no fruit, especially if it has been well worked and cultivated! But a land like yours, cultivated with so much care, watered by so many showers of heavenly graces, warmed by such rays of the sun of justice, with all this bearing no fruit, but become an arid and sterile waste—what greater evil could you look for than such sterility! This is rendering evil for good to Him to Whom you owe so much and from Whom so many blessings have come to you.

There is another comparison often employed to the same purpose, which seems to put the matter well. As at sea

there is a sort of heavy weather called "a calm," very dangerous for navigators, since they consume the provisions they had for the voyage and then find themselves without victuals in the midst of the sea, so it happens to those who are navigating the stormy sea of this world. They are becalmed in virtue, not caring to go on any farther therein; they consume and waste what they had acquired, run through what virtue they had, and then find themselves with nothing in the midst of the many waves and tempests of temptations that arise and the occasions that offer, for which they need more provision and more store of virtue. Woe to him that gets becalmed in virtue! *You were running well; who has hindered you from obeying the truth?* (Gal. v. 7). You began to run well when you entered religion, and now you are stranded and becalmed in virtue. *You are now full and in need of nothing* (I Cor. iv. 8). You play the senior and the man worn out with toil. You are rich, and have secured a competence. Consider that *you have still a long way to go* (III Kings xix. 7); that many occasions will arise requiring greater humility, greater patience, greater mortification and detachment; and you may find yourself unprovided and very behindhand in the hour of your greatest need.

CHAPTER VII

That It Is a Great Aid to the Attainment of Perfection to Forget Any Good Done in the Past, and Fix Our Eye on What Remains Still to be Done

LET him that is just aim at becoming more just, and him that is holy at becoming more holy (Apoc. xxii. 11). St. Jerome and St. Bede upon these words: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill* (Matt. v. 6), say that Christ our Redeemer "clearly teaches us in these words never to think that what we have

attained is sufficient, but every day to aim at becoming better"—*nunquam nos satis iustos aestimare debere, sed quotidianum iustitiae semper amare profectum*. That is what the glorious Evangelist St. John says in the words above quoted. The Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Philip-
pians, gives a very suitable means thereto, which he says he made use of himself. *Brethren, I do not take myself to be perfect*. Who shall take himself to be perfect, if the Apostle says that he does not hold himself for such? *But I try to make haste to gain perfection*. And what do you do for that? Do you know what? *I forget the past, and put before me what has still to be done; and to this I animate myself and aim at securing it* (Phil. iii. 13). All the saints greatly commend this means, and no wonder, since it was given and practised by the Apostle. St. Jerome says: "Whoever wishes to be a saint, let him forget all the past good that he has done in the past, and rouse himself to secure what is still undone. Blessed is he who every day advances in virtue and perfection. And who is he? Do you know who? He who regards not what he did yesterday, but what it will be well to do today in order to make progress." *Felix ergo est qui quotidie proficit, qui non considerat quid heri fecerit, sed quid hodie faciat ut proficiat*.

St. Gregory and St. Bernard declare this more in detail. This practice has two principal parts. The first is to forget the good we have done hitherto and never set our eyes on it. It is necessary to give this warning in particular, because it is natural to turn our eyes readily on what pleases us and withdraw them from what may give us trouble. And because the sight of the progress we have made and the good that we think we have done pleases us, and the sight of our spiritual poverty and the amount that is still wanting to us saddens us, therefore our eyes rather turn to look at the good that we have done than at what remains undone. St. Gregory says: As the sick man seeks the softest part of his bed, and the freshest and most agree-

able, to rest there, such is the infirmity of man and our frailty and imperfection that we find more joy and delight in looking at and thinking of the good that we have done than of that which remains for us still to make up. And St. Bernard further says: Understand that there are dangers here, for if you set yourself to look at the good you have done, what will come of that is that you will get proud, thinking that you are something; thence you will come at once to compare yourself with others and prefer yourself to them and even make light of them and much of yourself. Otherwise look at that Pharisee in the Gospel, what end came to him in this way. He set his eyes on the good that there was in him and applied his mind to reckoning up his virtues. *I thank thee, O Lord, that I am not as other men, robbers, unjust, adulterers, nor as that publican there: I fast twice a week, I pay punctually my tithes and first-fruits. Amen, I say unto you,* says Christ our Redeemer, *that that publican, to whom he preferred himself, went away just, and he who took himself for just went out condemned as wicked and unjust* (Luke xviii. 11-14). This is what the devil aims at in setting before you the good that you fancy you have done. His aim is that you should take yourself for somebody and become proud, and should despise others and make light of them, that so you may come to be condemned for a proud and bad man.

There is yet another danger, as St. Bernard says, in fixing your eyes on the good you have done and the labors you have undergone; it is that it will serve to make you careless of further progress, lukewarm and slack when there is question of going on, thinking that you have done enough work in religion and that you may now take your ease. Travelers, when they begin to grow weary of the road, turn their eyes back to see how much of it they have already gone; so when we are weary and lukewarmness is stealing over us, we begin to look at the work we have left behind; this makes us content with that, and apt more readily to settle down in our sloth.

To avoid these disadvantages and dangers it is highly expedient never to look at the good that we have done, but on the good we have still left undone: the sight of the former is an invitation to repose; the sight of the latter, an incitement to work. This is the second part of this prescription which the Apostle gives us, always to keep our eyes on what is wanting to our performances, thereby to animate and compel ourselves to make it up; this the saints declare by sundry examples and homely comparisons. St. Gregory says: As the debtor who is a thousand ducats in another man's debt does not rest or fold his arms upon having paid two hundred or four hundred, but keeps his eye ever fixed upon what still remains to pay—that it is that troubles him, and he is always in some solicitude until he has paid the whole debt—so we should not look at the good we have done hitherto, whereby we have paid part of the debt that we owe to God, but at the amount which remains to us to pay: this it is that should give us anxiety; this is the thorn that we should ever keep fixed in our heart. St. Gregory further says: As pilgrims and good travelers do not consider how far they have gone but how far they have yet got to go, and keep that before their eyes until they have finished their journey, so we, since we are travelers and wayfarers on the road to our heavenly country, should not look at the road we have gone over, but at the road that remains for us to go. Mark, he says, how for men on a journey, bound for a certain place, it avails little to have gone far if they do not complete the bit still to be gone. Mark again how the prize in a race, which is destined for the best runner, is not taken by him who runs a great part of the way nimbly and flags at the end. *So run that ye may attain*, says the Apostle (I Cor. ix. 24). Take care to run in such a way as to attain and compass what you are aiming at. Take no account of the run you have made up to this, but keep your eyes steadily on the goal of your journey, which is perfection, and see how much you come short

of it, and so you will get along well. "He never ceases running," says St. Chrysostom, "who reflects that he has not reached the goal."

St. Bernard says that we should be like the merchants and traders of the world. You will see a merchant, a business man, taking such care and pains daily to increase his property as to reckon nothing of what he has gained and acquired hitherto nor of the labors that it has cost him; all his care and solicitude is for fresh gains and a daily increase more and more, as though hitherto he had done nothing and gained nothing; in this manner, he says, we should behave. All our care should be how daily to increase our store, how daily to make profit in humility, charity, mortification, and all other virtues, taking no account of how we have labored and what we have acquired hitherto. So says Christ our Redeemer that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant, and He bids us do business: *Traffic till I come* (Luke xix. 13).

And to carry on further this comparison of a merchant, since the holy Gospel puts it before us, see how merchants and men of business in the world are so careful and solicitous as never to lose a point or miss an opportunity of increasing their store; and do you the like. Never lose a point nor let pass an opportunity of making progress without seizing it: "Let us all constantly endeavor to let slip no point of perfection that by God's grace we can attain," is the direction of our Father. Let slip no occasion of contriving to make some spiritual gain—from the biting little word that someone has said to you, from the command of obedience given against your will, from the occasion of humility that offers. All these are your gains, and you should go to seek and gather in these occasions; and on the day that the greatest number come in your way you should go to bed happier than usual, with the greatest satisfaction and cheerfulness, as does the merchant on the day that most occasions of gain present themselves, seeing that on

that day his business has gone well. So also on that day your business as a religious has gone well if you have known how to profit by your opportunities. And as the merchant does not consider whether another man loses, nor is concerned about that, but the one thing he takes account of is his own profit, and in that he rejoices, so you should not look whether your neighbor does well or ill in giving you this occasion, nor whether he is right or not, nor be indignant against him, but rejoice in your own gain. How far should we be from worrying ourselves and losing our peace of mind when the like occasions offer if we proceeded in this way! If what might sadden us and disturb our peace is the very thing that we desire and go in search of, what will be able to trouble or upset us?

Consider again how the merchant is so absorbed in his profits that he seems never to think of anything else. In all cases and happenings that occur, his eyes and his heart at once turn to see how he can make some profit therefrom. When he is eating, he is thinking of this; and with this thought and care he goes to bed; with this he awakes at night, and rises in the morning, and goes thinking of it all day long. Now in this way we ought to proceed in the business of our souls; in all cases and happenings that occur, our eyes and heart should at once turn to see how we can make some spiritual profit thereof. This should be our thought when we sit at table; with this thought and care we should rise in the morning and go about all day long, and all our life long. For this is our business and our treasure, and there is nothing else for us to seek. St. Bonaventure adds that, as the merchant does not find all that he desires and needs in one market or fair, but in several, so the religious must seek to draw spiritual profit not only from prayer and spiritual consolation, but also from temptations, mean and lowly occupations, and from every occasion that offers.

Oh, if we sought and strove after virtue in this fashion, how soon should we find ourselves rich! *If thou seekest,*

says the Wise Man, *after virtue and perfection, which is true wisdom, with the care and diligence wherewith men of the world seek after money and dig for mines and treasures, without doubt thou wilt light upon it* (Prov. ii. 4). And the Lord does not ask much of us in this, says St. Bernard, since to gain true wisdom and the true treasure, which is God Himself, He does not ask of us more care and diligence than men of the world employ in gaining perishable riches, which are liable to maggots and robbers, and tomorrow must come to an end; whereas the craving and desire of spiritual goods, and solicitude to attain them, ought to be greater in proportion as those goods are greater and more precious than the temporal. Hence St. Bernard's lamentation: "It is a great confusion and shame to us to see how much more diligent and careful worldly people are about worldly things, and even about their vices and sins, than we are about virtue; and with how much more promptitude and alacrity they run to their death than we to our life."

It is set down in ecclesiastical history that the Abbot Pambo, going one day to Alexandria and meeting with a worldly woman who was very finely dressed, began to weep bitterly, crying out several times: "Alas! What a miserable man am I!" And his disciples having asked him why he sighed and wept so bitterly, he answered: "Would you not have me weep to see this miserable woman taking more care and diligence to please men than I do to please God; and to see her at greater pains to lay snares for men, to drag them into hell, than I use endeavors to gain them for heaven?" Also, that apostolic man, Father Francis Xavier, was ashamed and extremely troubled to see that merchants had got before him into Japan, and that they had been more diligent to sail thither to sell their merchandise than he had been to carry thither the treasure of the Gospel, propagate the faith, and increase the kingdom of God. Let us conceive the same thoughts and be filled with a holy confusion to see *that the children of this world are wiser and*

more careful in the concerns of this life than we are in our concerns for heaven (Luke xvi. 8). Let this be enough to draw us out of our tepidity and sloth.

CHAPTER VIII

That It Is a Great Aid to Perfection to Fix Our Eyes on Lofty and Exalted Things

OUR advancement in perfection will be greatly helped on by our fixing our eyes on lofty ideals that require great perfection to realize. So St. Paul advises, writing to the Corinthians: *Be ye emulous of the better gifts* (I Cor. xii. 31). Get yourselves ready for great things; meet and undertake things great and excellent. This is a determination of much importance, for our designs and desires must needs reach out very far if our performances are at least to come up to what is our strict duty. Where a bow or catapult is slack, then to hit the mark it is necessary to aim from three to six inches higher; otherwise, the string being loose, the missile will not go where you want, but by aiming it higher it comes to hit the mark. We are like a slack bow or catapult. We are so poorly strung that, to hit the mark, it is necessary to aim very high. Man was left by sin so miserable that to come to attain mediocrity in virtue it is necessary for his purposes and desires to travel far beyond. Someone says: "My only aim is to avoid mortal sin: I seek no further perfection." I greatly fear that you are not likely to attain even that, for the catapult is slack. If you aimed higher, you might reach that; but not aiming higher, I fear you must come short and are in great danger of falling into mortal sin.

The religious who makes it his endeavor to observe not God's commandments alone, but His counsels also, and to keep not from mortal sins alone, but from venial sins and imperfections, takes a good way to keep clear of mortal sin,

since he aims much higher than that. And when through frailty he does not reach the height he proposed, but falls somewhat short, he will fail in a matter of counsel, in some small rule, and it will be an imperfection or at most a venial sin. But the other, whose only aim is not to commit mortal sin, when he falls short of that through the looseness of his bow and catapult, will fall into some mortal sin. And that is why among people of the world we see so many fall into mortal sins, while good religious, by the goodness of God, are so free and far removed from them. This is one of the greatest blessings that we have in religion, a blessing for which we owe many thanks to God, who has brought us thereto; though there were no other blessing in religion than this, that would be enough to make us live in great consolation and contentment, and to hold it for a great mercy and benefit of the Lord that He has drawn us to such a life, since here I trust in the Lord that you will pass your whole life without falling into mortal sin; whereas, were you in the world, I dare say you would not pass a year, or even a month, or perhaps even one week, without it.

Hence also will be understood the danger of the tepid and lax religious who thinks nothing of breaking the rules and will have no thought for things of perfection, since such a one is very near a fall in some grave matter. So, then, if you wish to advance, set your eyes on acquiring a most perfect humility, going so far as to receive with cheerfulness slights and affronts; and God grant that, after all that, you may come to endure them with patience. Set your eyes on acquiring a most perfect obedience of will and understanding; and you may be thankful if you do not fail sometimes in the execution of the thing commanded and in punctuality in fulfilling the same. Try to store up resignation and indifference as if to undergo great difficulties and trials that might occur; and, please God, you may be so afterwards in the ordinary and common accidents of daily life.

This, says St. Augustine, was the counsel of God, to put at the head of His commandments the highest and most perfect of them all: *Thou shalt love God with thy whole heart, with thy whole will, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength: this is the greatest of all the commandments and the end of them all* (Deut. vi. 5; Matt. xxii. 37). So great is the excellence of this commandment that theologians and saints say that its final perfection is not a thing of this life but of the next. Not to be occupied with anything else but God, and always to keep all our heart, all our will and understanding, and all our powers intent on loving Him, is the state of heavenly bliss; we cannot in this life attain so far as that, because we are forced to attend to the requirements of the body. And though this commandment is so high and involves so great perfection, nevertheless the Lord puts it in the front first of all, that we may know up to what point we are to extend our efforts and whither we should endeavor to arrive. Therefore, says St. Augustine, did God from the very beginning put before our eyes this so great and high commandment, that, having our eyes fixed on an end so high and requiring such great perfection, we should try to bare our arm and put the weight as far as ever we can. The higher we aim, the less shall we fall short.

On those words of the prophet: *Blessed is the man whom thou aidest, for he shall plan in his heart increases and ascensions in virtue* (Psalm lxxxiii. 6), St. Jerome says: The just and holy man ever has before his eyes the thought of ascending and going further in perfection; that is what he carries riveted in his mind, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *The thoughts and purposes of the robust man shall ever be in abundance* (Prov. xxi. 5). But the sinner and the imperfect man has no such thought; he contents himself with an ordinary life; at most he sets before his eyes a standard of mediocrity, and thence he comes to fall away and go down. Gerson says: This is the language

of many people: "An ordinary life is enough for me; I want only to save my soul; as for those high and excellent heights of perfection, let them be for apostles and great saints: I don't pretend to fly so high, but to walk along a flat cart-road"—*Vox multorum est: sufficit mihi vita communis; si cum illis salvari potero satis est. Nolo merita apostolorum, nolo volare per summa, incedere per planiora contentus sum.* This is the language of the imperfect, who are many, since the perfect are few. Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel: *The gate and way that leadeth to perfection and life is narrow and strait, and there are few that enter thereby, but the common way of sloth is very wide, and many there are that go therein* (Matt. vii. 13-14). St. Augustine says that these are they whom the prophet calls *beasts of the fields* (Psalm viii. 8) because they seek always to walk in the field, a wide, spacious place, and will never be confined to any rule or restraint. And Gerson says that by such language as this: "Enough for me an ordinary life; so I be but saved, it is sufficient; I aspire not to any higher perfection," a man plainly discovers his imperfection, since he makes no effort to enter in by the narrow gate. He adds further that these people who through their sloth and tepidity fancy that it is enough for them to gain the lowest seat in heaven, have great reason to fear lest they may come to be condemned with the foolish virgins who slumbered and slept, or with the slothful servant who buried the talent he had received and was therefore deprived of the one talent he had and cast into outer darkness; and we find not in the Gospel that he was condemned for anything else but for having neglected to improve the talent his master had endowed him withal (Matt. xxv.).

But to make it appear more clearly how shameful and deplorable a condition those men are in, the same Gerson uses this example. "Imagine," he says, "a father of a family, rich and highborn, who has many children, all of them quite capable of advancing the family and winning by their

industry and abilities great honor to themselves and their lineage. All apply themselves with care to do their duty except one, who, while all the rest are doing what sons of such a sire should do, alone, out of sloth and laziness, chooses to sit idle at home enjoying himself, and cares not to do anything worthy of his ability and the rank of his father to increase the fortune of the family, though, if he would, he could do as well as any of the rest." Enough for him, he says, is a moderate competence; he has no mind for further honor or further augmentation, nor will he work for that end. The father calls upon him; begs and coaxes him to entertain higher thoughts; puts before him his ability, talents, and good parts, the nobility of his lineage, the example of his ancestors and of his brothers still living; but for all that he has no mind to leave his fireside or endeavor to be more of a man. Such a son clearly would give great annoyance to his father. In like manner, says Gerson, as we are sons of God and brothers of Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father is exhorting us and animating us to perfection: "My sons, be not content with an ordinary life." *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. v. 48). Look at the generosity and perfection of your Father and behave as His sons whose sons you are, to show that you are *sons of your Father who is in heaven* (Matt. v. 45); look at the example of your brethren. If you will but fix your eyes on the example of your elder Brother, Jesus Christ! He it is that has honored all our race; and though it cost Him His blood and His life, He gave it as a good bargain for that exchange.

And if such an example is too dazzling for your eyes, fix them on your other brothers, men as weak as you are, born in sin as you were, full of passions and temptations and evil inclinations as you. It is for this that Mother Church puts before us the examples of the saints and celebrates their feasts. And if you wish to take examples that come nearer home, look at those of your brethren, born of the

same mother, of the same religious order and Society. Fix your eyes on a Father Ignatius, on a Francis Xavier and Francis Borgia, on an Edmund Campion, and on others like them that you know. Try to imitate them; be not you a disgrace to your lineage and your order. And if with all this there is anyone not animated to do deeds of valor, but content with an ordinary and common life, is it not clear that, as far as in him lies, he will give displeasure and annoyance to God Himself, Who is our Father, and bad example to his brothers, and deserves that the heavenly Father should not own him for a son, nor his brothers know him for their brother?

Now this is what we are saying, that we should cherish high and generous thoughts and ever fix our eyes and heart on great and noble deeds, to the end that, supposing in our weakness we do not attain so high, at least we may not fall so far short nor be so much behind. Let us do in this matter as men who offer wares for sale; to start with, they usually ask more than the just price, to the end that buyers may come to give them what is just; and they who make bargains are wont at the beginning to demand more than is reasonable to bring the other party to reason, according to the proverb: "Ask what is unjust, or more than is just, that they may come to give you what is just." So it is here. I do not tell you to ask for what is unjust, but for what is most just. Fix your eyes on what is more just, that you may come at least to what is just. Ask and desire what is more precious, that so you may attain to mediocrity; for if you fix your eyes merely on mediocrity and do not reach out to more, even that you will not attain, but will fall far below.

By this it may be seen how important it is that in our spiritual conferences and exhortations we should treat of things of great perfection, exhorting to a profound humility, even to the furthest degree thereof; to a perfect mortification of all our passions and appetites; to an entire conformity with the will of God, so that it should not remain

with us to will or not will aught else but what God wills or wills not, His will being our whole content and delight. And so in other virtues someone may say: "What is the use of talking and preaching such high doctrine to weak folk; aye, sometimes to mere beginners? If you proposed to us things proportionate to our weakness, plain and easy things, possibly we might embrace them; but in speaking of these points of perfection that reach to the third heaven you seem to be not speaking to us, but to an Apostle St. Paul and the like of him." You are mistaken; they are meant for you; it is to you we speak when we speak of these points of perfection; and the very reason that you allege for not speaking of them is our reason for speaking. You say you are weak and that I ought not to propose to you such high things. I say that it is just because you are weak that I must put these points of perfection before you, that setting your eyes on them you may come to mount reasonably high and not remain so low and limited in virtue.

For this end it is a great help to read much and hear read the lives of saints, and consider their excellent and heroic virtues; it being the intention of holy Church in proposing to us their heroic deeds, to invite us at least to get out of our sloth. And there is this other advantage in such reading, that it confounds and humbles us to consider the purity of life of these saints, and how far we come short of it. St. Gregory, on those words of Job: *He will look upon men, and say: I have sinned* (Job xxxiii. 27), says that, as a poor man is much more sensible of his own poverty when he considers the vast wealth and treasures of rich men, so the soul humbles herself more deeply and better knows her indigence, when she reflects upon those great examples the saints have left us and the glorious actions they have done. St. Anthony having been to visit St. Paul, the first hermit, and seen his great sanctity, his disciples went out to meet him on his return, saying, "Where have you been, Father?" "Alas," replied the holy man, "miserable sinner that I am,

I have no right to bear the name of a religious. I have seen Elias, I have seen John the Baptist in the desert, when I beheld Paul in paradise." We read also of the great St. Macarius that, having seen the sublime perfection of some monks whom he had visited, the blessed man wept, saying to his disciples: "I have seen monks; these are monks; I am no monk. Woe is me! I falsely bear the name of monk." What the saints said out of their deep humility, we may say with greater truth considering their examples. Thus by humility and shame we should make up what is wanting to us, and so on all sides aid ourselves much by this means.

CHAPTER IX

How Important It Is to Set Store by Little Things and Not Despise Them

HE that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little (Ecclus. xix. 1). The lesson contained in this saying is of great importance, especially for aspirants to perfection. Great things of their own importance press upon our attention, but in smaller matters we are apt more easily to be careless and take little account of them as if they were of little value and importance, which is a great mistake, not without serious consequences. "They who fall into the greatest faults begin with the smallest"—*A minimis incipiunt qui in maxima proruunt*, says St. Bernard. He quotes a common saying: "No one goes to any extreme on a sudden"—*Nemo repente fit summus*. As a rule, no one ever comes to be on a sudden either very good or very bad, but good and evil grow little by little. Little by little great bodily ailments are developed, and spiritual ailments and great maladies of the soul in the same way. Thus when you see great falls of servants of God, think not, says the saint, that the evil began when it first came to your notice. One who has persevered a long time leading a good life,

never comes to slip and fall all of a sudden; his fall comes of his first having become careless of tiny little things, by which carelessness, little by little, virtue was weakened in his soul and he deserved that God should withdraw His hand a little away from him, and so he was open to being easily overcome afterwards by a great temptation falling in his way.

Cassian illustrates this by a very appropriate comparison, a comparison used also by the Holy Ghost. Houses, he says, do not fall down of a sudden, but first the thing begins by some little leakages; then little by little the timbers of the building rot; the mischief gets into the walls and softens and imperceptibly ruins them till it reaches the foundations, and then the whole structure collapses in one night.

We are told, then, in the above words to beware of this danger, because he who makes no account of small things, little by little will fall into greater faults. This should be enough to convince us and put us on our guard, since it is the counsel of the Holy Ghost Himself. *By sloth and want of care*, says the Holy Ghost in Ecclesiastes, *the roof will come to fall, and for want of taking care to repair it, it will rain through* (Eccles. x. 18). Through neglect of repairing the house at the beginning when the damage was small; through not tiling it and stopping the leakages, some fine morning it comes to show itself a ruin. In like manner do men come to great falls and very evil ends. First come in our little affections and our passions like so many small leakages, and they go on little by little penetrating and softening and weakening the virtue of our soul, and so the whole building goes crash from mere neglect of repairs at the beginning when the mischief was small. From negligence in stopping those little leakages, from taking no account of small things, one fine morning a man finds himself under temptation; another day and he is out of religion. Would to God we had not so much experience

of this! Truly it strikes one with great fear and dismay to see the first little cracks that were the beginning of the ruin of some who came to a very bad end. The devil is a clever fellow. He does not in the first instance assail God's servants in great matters—he is much too acute for that; but, little by little, imperceptibly, in small and minute things, he does his work better than if he tempted his man in great things. If he started with mortal sins, he would easily be perceived and packed off; but, entering by small and minute things, he is neither perceived nor packed off, but admitted.

Therefore does St. Gregory say that in some ways there is more danger in small faults than in great ones, because great ones are more clearly known and the evil of them accordingly is more in evidence, moving us to avoid them and to feel more alarm when we fall into them; but small faults are less known, less easily avoided, and made less account of; and as they are made nothing of, so they are repeated and continued, and men settle down to them and never make up their minds manfully to throw them off; and on the heels of small faults there come great ones. St. Chrysostom quite agrees. He says a thing which he calls a marvel: "I dare to utter a marvelous saying, which will appear to you new and unheard of; it is that sometimes we need take more care and pains over avoiding small sins than over avoiding great ones. For great sins of themselves strike us with horror, so that we abhor and fly from them; but the other sins, by the very fact that they are small, make us remiss and negligent; and as we make little account of them, so we never succeed in getting clear of them, and so they come to do us great harm"—*Mirabile quidem et inauditum dicere audeo: solet mihi nonnunquam non tanto studio magna videri esse peccata vitanda quanto parva et vilia; illa enim ut aversemur ipsa peccati natura efficit, haec autem hac ipsa re quia parva sunt desides reddunt, et dum contemnuntur non potest ad expulsionem*

eorum animus genere insurgere, unde cito ex parvis maxima fiunt negligentia nostra.

This is the reason why the devil sets so much store by this means of approaching and assailing religious men and servants of God; and also because he knows right well that thereby he will gain a footing to succeed in making them afterwards fall in greater things. So St. Augustine says: "What matters it whether by a little or a great leak the water enters into the ship, so that in the end it founders? I care not for one more than the other, for it all comes to the same in the end." So the devil cares not whether he comes in by small things or by great things, so that he finally gains his end, which is to destroy and sink us. Of little drops of water multiplied, says St. Bonaventure, there come to be formed torrents and floods so great as to level to the ground high walls and buildings and strong castles. By a little leak and by a chink and crack the water silently and little by little makes its way into the ship until it sends it to the bottom. For this reason St. Augustine says that, as when a ship springs a leak, it is necessary to be always at the pump, pumping the water out that the ship may not founder, so by the help of meditation and examen we must be always ridding ourselves of the faults and imperfections that little by little are gaining upon us, that we may not founder and be drowned. This must be the exercise of the religious; we must be always at the pump, otherwise we run great risk. And elsewhere he says: "You have eschewed and escaped the waves and tempests and great dangers that there are in the stormy sea of the world; see that you do not come here in the harbor of religion to run aground on a sandbank; see that you do not come to danger and destruction by minute and small things; for at that rate it will profit you little to have eschewed and escaped those great dangers and tempests and rocks and cliffs, if afterwards in the harbor you come to stick fast in the sand."

CHAPTER X

*Another Weighty Reason for Setting Great Store by
Little Things*

ANOTHER considerable reason why we should make account of little things is that, if we are careless and negligent in little things and take small heed thereof, it is to be feared that God will refuse us His particular and special aids and graces which we stand in need of to resist temptations and not fall into sin and to obtain the virtue and perfection which we desire; and so we come to great harm.

The better to understand this, we must presuppose a very good piece of theology taught us by St. Paul when writing to the Corinthians—that God our Lord never refuses to anyone that supernatural assistance and succor whereby, if he will, he will not be overcome by temptation but be able to resist and come out victorious. *God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above your strength, but will give you such aid in temptation as that you may be able to suffer it with advantage* (I Cor. x. 13). God is faithful, says the Apostle; you may rest assured that He will not permit you to be tempted more than you are able to bear; and if He adds more trials and there come greater temptations, He will also add more succor and bounty that you may be able to come out of them, not only without loss, but with much profit and increase of good. But there is another aid and succor of God more special and particular. Man could resist and overcome temptation without this special aid if he availed himself as he ought of the first supernatural assistance, which is more general. But, oftentimes, with that first aid man will not resist temptation unless God give him that other aid more particular and special. Not that he could not, but that he will not; for if he willed, he might well resist with that first aid, since it is sufficient

for the purpose if he would make the use of it that he ought. In that case his falling and being overcome by temptation will be his own fault, since it will be by his own will. And if God gave him then that other special assistance, he would not fall.

But to come to our point. This second aid and special superabundant and efficacious succor is not given by God to all, nor on all occasions, since it is a liberality and a most particular grace of His own bestowal; and so God will give it to whom He pleases; He will give it to those who have been liberal with Him. So the prophet says: *With the holy, Lord, thou wilt be holy; and with the benign, benign; and with the liberal and sincere, thou wilt be sincere and liberal; and with him that shall not be such, thou wilt pay him in the same coin* (Psalm xvii. 26-27). This is what our Father puts in his Rules: "The closer one shall bind himself to God our Lord, and the more liberal he shall show himself to His Divine Majesty, the more liberal he will find God to him; and the better shall he be disposed to receive every day greater graces and spiritual gifts." This is the doctrine of St. Gregory Nazianzen and other saints.

What it is to be liberal to God may be well understood from what it is to be liberal to men. In this world to be liberal to another is to give him, not his due and bonded right, but more than his due and bonded right. That is liberality; the other is not liberality, but justice and obligation. Now in the same manner, he who is very careful and diligent to please God, not only in matters of obligation, but also in those of supererogation and perfection, and not only in greater, but also in lesser things, he is liberal to God. Now to them that are thus liberal, God also is very liberal. These are God's favorites to whom He shows His bounties; to these He gives not only those general aids which are sufficient to resist and overcome temptations, but also those special and superabundant and efficacious aids wherewith they will nowise fall when they are tempted.

But if you are not liberal to God, how can you expect God to be liberal to you? If you are niggardly with God, you deserve that God should be niggardly with you. If you are so mean and close as to go sounding and measuring as with rule and compass—"Am I bound or not bound? Am I bound under sin or not bound under sin? Does it amount to a mortal sin or to no more than a venial?"—all this is being niggardly with God, since you want to give Him no more than you are obliged, and even in that possibly you fail. God then will be niggardly with you and give you no more than He is obliged by His word; He will give you those general and necessary aids which He gives to all, which are enough and sufficient to enable you to resist temptations and not fall in them; but you will have much reason to fear that He will not give you that special superabundant and efficacious aid which He is wont to give to such as are liberal to Him; and so you will come to be vanquished by temptation and fall into sin.

This is what theologians and saints commonly say, that one sin is often the punishment of another sin. That is to be understood in this way, that by the first sin a man loses, as punishment of his sin, all claim to that special and particular aid of God, and renders himself unworthy of it; and so he comes to fall into a second sin. They say the same of venial sins, and further of faults and negligences and general carelessness of life; for this also they say that a man may lose all claim and render himself unworthy of that special and efficacious assistance of God with which he will persevere and actually overcome temptation, and without which he will be overcome and fall into sin. So some saints explain the words of the Wise Man: *He that despiseth small things, shall fall little by little* (Ecclus. xix. 1). By despising small things and making little account of them one comes to render oneself unworthy of that special assistance of God, and so one comes to fall into great faults. In like manner is to be understood the saying of the Apoca-

lypse (iii. 16) : *Because thou art tepid, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.* God has not yet vomited and thrown up entirely the tepid man, but He has begun to vomit and throw him up because by this negligence in which he lives, and these faults which he commits with advertence and of set purpose, he goes the way to make himself undeserving of that special and efficacious aid without which he will fall; and God will end by vomiting and throwing him up.

Let us consider how much reason we have to fear lest we should lose all claim and render ourselves unworthy of this special aid of God through our tepidity and sloth. How often do we see ourselves assailed with temptations and in great danger, and many times we find ourselves in doubt—"Did I dwell on it or not? Did I consent or not? Did it amount to a sin or not?" Oh, how well it would be worth our while for those critical moments to have been liberal to God and so made ourselves worthy of that special and liberal aid of grace whereby we should be quite secure of always keeping our footing, and without which we shall be in great danger and possibly be overcome!

St. Chrysostom assigns this means as one of the chief that we have for overcoming temptations. Speaking of the devil, our enemy, and of the continual war that he wages against us, he says: "You know well, my brethren, that we have in the devil a perpetual enemy who is always making war upon us, who never sleeps nor relaxes his efforts: you can have no truce with that cruel monster. So it is necessary always to be very wide-awake and very careful and watchful not to be overcome by him." How, then, shall we stand on our guard and prepare ourselves well not to be overcome, but always to get the better of this traitor and keep him under? Do you know how? St. Chrysostom says: "The only means to overcome him is to have gained beforehand this special assistance of God by our good life in the past. In this way we shall be always victorious, and

in no other." Notice the expression, "in no other." St. Basil makes the same observation in these words: "He who wishes to be helped by the Lord never ceases doing what lies with him to do. He who does this is never left destitute of the divine assistance;" wherefore, he concludes: "We must make it our effort that our conscience shall not reproach us in anything." A sound conclusion is that we must be very careful in our spiritual exercises and in all our works to be worthy of this special aid from heaven.

Hence it will be seen how important it is to make much account of small things—if we can call those things small which bring us in so much good or so much harm. *He who feareth God, neglecteth nothing* (Eccles. vii. 19), because he knows full well that out of small things neglected one comes little by little to fail in greater; and he fears that, if he ceases to be liberal with God in these things, God will cease to be liberal with him.

In conclusion I say that this matter is so important, and we should make so much account of it, that we may take it as a general rule that, so long as a man makes much of little and minute things, all will go well, and the Lord will befriend him; and on the contrary, when he ceases to reckon much of little and minute things, he will incur great danger, because it is in this way that all evil enters into a religious. This Jesus Christ gives us to understand, saying: *He that is faithful in what is little, will be faithful also in what is much; and he that is unfaithful and evil in what is little, will be the like in what is much* (Luke xvi. 10). And therefore when one wishes to see how one is getting on in spiritual progress—and it is reasonable that we should often make reflection thereupon—let him examine himself by this and see whether he makes account of little things or whether he is getting into free and easy ways by taking small heed of them; and if he sees that now he does not trouble himself about small matters, nor does his conscience reproach him thereon as it used to do, let him look for a

remedy with all care. The devil, says St. Basil, when he sees that he cannot drive us out of religion, applies all his powers to persuade us not to give ourselves to perfection and not to make account of small matters, deceiving us by a false assurance that one does not lose God for that. But we, on the contrary, should make it our effort that as he cannot drive us out of religion, so neither shall he hinder our perfection; but we will apply ourselves thereto with all our strength, setting much store by little and minute things.

CHAPTER XI

That the Business of Our Spiritual Advancement Is Not To Be Taken in General, but in Particular; and of How Great Importance It Is to Put Into Execution Those Good Purposes Wherewith God Inspires Us

IT will also be a great help towards our improvement—and it is a means commonly given by the masters of spiritual life—that we should not take this business of our improvement in general and in common, but in particular and little by little. Cassian says that the Abbot Moses one day in a spiritual conference asked his monks what it was that they aimed at by all their labors, abstinences, vigils, prayers, and mortification. They answered: “The kingdom of heaven.” He said: That is the last end, but I ask now, what is the immediate and particular end you are aiming at whereby to arrive at your last end? Take the case of the laborer: his end is to gather much food and have wherewithal to spend his life in abundance; but all his care and diligence he expends in working at and cultivating the earth and clearing it of weeds, for that is the necessary means to the other end. And the merchant, though his end is to grow rich, applies all his thoughts to consider what businesses and what method of doing business will be most to

the purpose for gaining this end, and there he applies all his industry and diligence. So the religious should act. It is not enough to say in general: "I intend to save my soul;" "I will be a good religious;" "I desire to be perfect;" but he must fix his eyes in particular on the passion or vice that stands most in his way and the virtue that is most wanting to him; and he must labor to gain that. In this way, advancing little by little and proceeding with care and diligence, now upon one thing, now upon another, he will come better to attain to what he aims at.

This is the means that another Father of the Desert proposed to that monk who, after being long very diligent and fervent, grew to be negligent in his spiritual exercises and generally very tepid. Desiring to recover his former state and finding the road closed and apparently very difficult, he did not know where to begin. The other consoled and animated him by this parable or example of a man who sent his son to clear the estate, which was full of thorns and weeds. The son, seeing the amount there was to do, lost heart and fell asleep and did nothing that day and the next. The father said to him: "You should not, boy, look at or take all the labor before you in a lump, but every day do a little, just enough to take in the body of a man." He did so, and in a short time cleared the whole estate.

Here it should be observed that one of the chief reasons why we get on slowly, and the Lord does not do us more favors, is that we do not put in execution the good purposes and desires which He gives us; and so because we do not give a good account of what He gives us, He does not bestow on us further gifts. A schoolmaster will not let a child go on to a higher style of letters or better copy until he has formed and copied well what has been given him; so the Lord is wont to deal with us in raising us to perfection. He is slower to give us greater things, the slower we are to put to good use what He has given us. And the more a man sets to work to realize and put in execution the desires

that the Lord gives him in prayer, the more is God moved to grant him greater things.

Father Master Avila well says: "Whoever makes a good use of what he knows, will gain light to see what he does not know." Any other man cannot have the face to ask for that, since it may be well replied to him: "Why do you seek to know My will and good pleasure when what you know you do not carry out?" If you do not put into act the desires which the Lord gives you, how can you wish that He should give you greater things? With what face can you ask God in prayer to grant you this or that which you desire and find needful if you have no mind to amend or mortify yourself in point of a fault where you have great need of amendment, and God has given you many desires and inspirations about it? I do not know how you can raise up your eyes to beg of God other greater things, you who have no purpose of amendment even in the matter of an exterior fault that you have, but let yourself deliberately fall into it again and again. If, then, we wish to make progress in spirit, and that the Lord should do us great favors, let us be diligent in putting into execution the inspirations and desires which the Lord gives us.

It is the common doctrine of the saints that he who makes a good use of the benefits he has received renders himself worthy of fresh benefits; and, contrariwise, he who makes a bad use of them does not deserve to receive more. The Wise Man in Wisdom (xvi.) propounds this question: What is the reason why the manna melted away at the first ray of the sun and was of no further use; while if they put it in the fire it did not liquify, nor did the fire do it any harm, the heat of the fire being stronger than that of the sun? The same Wise Man answers at the end of the same chapter: *That it might be known to all that we must be beforehand with the sun to bless thee* (Wisdom xvi. 28)—that all might understand that it behooves us to be diligent in making our profit of the benefits that the Lord gives us

and the blessings that we receive at His hand; and in punishment of the ingratitude and laziness that would not get up in the morning before sunrise to profit by the boon that the Lord had vouchsafed, God permitted the sun to spoil the provisions for the day. This is also what Christ our Redeemer marvelously declares in the holy Gospel (Luke xix.) in that parable of the nobleman who divided his substance among his servants that they might traffic therewith. When, after having taken possession of his kingdom, he asked them for an account, he made them governors or commandants of so many cities in proportion to the number of talents which each one had gained; him who had gained ten talents, he made governor of ten cities, and him who had gained five, of five—giving us to understand that as this king rewarded the industry and fidelity of his servants with such a step upwards as there is from ten talents to ten cities, so also if we put into execution the inspirations of God and are loyal and faithful in corresponding with them, very great also will be the abundant liberality wherewith the Lord will augment His divine gifts; and, contrariwise, if we do not correspond as we ought, not only will He deprive us of what He has given us, but we shall be further chastised, as was that servant who had not profited nor gained anything with the talent that he had received.

It is related of that most famous painter, Apelles, that, however numerous his occupations, he never passed a day on which he did not practise his art and paint something; and, stealing the time from other occupations that offered, he would say: "Today I have not drawn a line"—*Hodie lineam nullam duxi*. From that it became a proverb for any office when the day was let slip without practising or doing anything at it. That is how he came to be such a perfect and consummate painter. If, then, you desire to be a perfect and consummate religious, let no day pass on which you do not draw some line and make some mark in virtue. Go on overcoming and mortifying yourself every day in

something; go on banishing every day some fault from the actions that you do, for in this way they will become daily better and more perfect. And when you come to the midday examen, see whether you have passed that half day without having drawn any line or marked any point in virtue, and say: "Today I have not drawn a line; oh, dear, today I have made no step forward in virtue, nor mortified myself in anything, nor made so much as one act of humility when I found occasions for it. I have spent this day to no purpose. It must not be so this evening; it must not be so tomorrow morning." In this way, little by little, we shall come to advance much.

CHAPTER XII

That It Will Be a Great Aid to the Attainment of Perfection Not to Commit Faults on Purpose, and Never Relax in Fervor

IT will also aid us much towards growth in virtue and perfection to try never to commit faults on purpose. There are two sorts of faults and venial sins; the one sort is that into which those who fear God fall through frailty, ignorance, and inadvertence, albeit with some carelessness and negligence. As to such faults as these, they who serve God and walk in His sight with an upright heart know by experience that they cause no bitterness of heart, but rather humility; nor do they find that on that account God turns away His face from them, but rather they experience new favor from the Lord and a new spirit by the humble recourse they have to God for them. Other faults and defects there are which they fall into with advertence and on purpose, who are tepid and remiss in the service of God; and these faults are an obstacle to the great blessings we should receive if we did not commit them. For these faults the Lord will often turn away His face from us in prayer,

and withdraw many favors. Thus, if we wish to thrive and receive many favors of the Lord, we must take care not to commit faults on purpose. Enough the faults that we commit through our ignorance and inadvertence; let us not add to them more. Enough the distractions that we have in prayer through the fickleness of our imaginations; let us not distract ourselves voluntarily and on purpose. Enough the faults that we commit against the rules through our weakness; let us not break them of set purpose.

St. Basil lays down another means for gaining perfection, and says it is an excellent way to advance much in a short time; it is not to call halts on the road of virtue. There are those who make temporary efforts and then stop. Go on as you have begun and do not call these halts. On this road of spiritual life you will find yourself more wearied by making these halts than by not making them. In this there is a great difference from the bodily exercises; the more the body works and labors, the more it is worn out; but the more the spirit works, the more strength it gathers: *caro operando deficit, spiritus operando proficit* (St. Basil). And says the proverb: "The bow that is kept strung breaks, but the soul unstrung decays"—*Arcum frangit intentio, animum remissio*. St. Ambrose says that, as it is easier not to fall into sin but preserve innocence than after a fall to do true penance, so also it is easier to keep up the fervor of prayer and devotion than to return to it after being distracted for several days. The blacksmith who draws the iron red-hot from the furnace, in order that it may be soft and ready for him to make of it what he wishes with his hammer, does not let it go altogether cold, but before it goes cold he puts it back in the furnace so that he may readily deal with it as before. So we should never allow the heat of our devotion to die down; for once our heart has grown cold and callous, it will be hard to go back to our first fervor. Thus we see by experience that, however much a man may have advanced in virtue, yet if he grows care-

less for a season, in the little time that he surrenders to distractions and ceases to continue his pious exercises, he loses all that he had gained in a long time; scarce a trace is left of what he had before and it is with difficulty that he returns to it. Contrariwise, they who go on with fervor and persevere in their pious exercises, easily hold their own and in a short time advance much. The reason is that they lose no time and do not undo what they have done, unlike the tepid and slothful, who with their frequent halts do and undo, weave and unweave, and never finish their web. But the fervent, far from undoing, get on with their work and gather new strength daily by continual exercise, and new facility to do more and do it better; so they advance much. So says the Wise Man: *Hands slothful and remiss bring on poverty, but the hands of the strong gather riches* (Prov. x. 4). He who does not choose to work will grow poor, and he that puts his strength into his work will grow rich. *The soul of them that work shall grow fat* (Prov. xiii. 4).

A father of our Society, comparing tepid and slack religious with the diligent and fervent, used to say that the tepid and remiss who as they grow into seniors come to play the part of idlers and make it not their aim to get on with their perfection, are like old servants in the houses of our nobility, who render no service in the house, but make a show and sit by the gates of their masters' houses telling stories. They are given their keep as old servants, but they do not find favor or advancement with the master; indeed, he scarcely remembers them. You will see other young servants, youths so diligent and solicitous in the service of their master that they never think of pausing or sitting down all day long. Hardly has their master given them a hint of what he wants than the thing is done. These are they that find favor and advancement. Such are diligent and fervent religious.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Three Other Means That Will Enable Us to Advance in Virtue

A very good means to advance much is given by St. Basil and by the saints generally. It is that we should fix our eyes on the best members of the community, those whose virtue shines forth more conspicuously, and set about imitating them. The same counsel was given by the blessed Abbot St. Anthony; he said that the religious should go about like the busy bee, gathering from all flowers to make his honey—modesty from one, silence from another, patience from a third, from another obedience, from another indifference and resignation; in each one we should study that in which he shines most in order to imitate him. So we read that he did and thereby he became such a great saint. This is one of the chief blessings that we enjoy in religion, and therefore St. Jerome recommended community life rather than solitude, to the end that from one member you may learn humility, from another patience; this one will teach you to keep silence, the other, meekness. A philosopher named Chaerilas, a leading man of much distinction among the Lacedemonians, being asked what commonwealth he took to be the best in the world, said: "That wherein the citizens live together without any quarrels or seditions, and vie with one another who shall be most virtuous." This boon, among others, our Lord has given us in religion. May it please His Divine Majesty that it may always be so! There in the world, in almost all states, all men's contentions and rivalries turn on property and points of honor; scarcely will you find a man who has any emulation for virtue: but here, by the bounty and mercy of God, all the study of religious is in what touches on the renunciation of self, and how to grow more in virtue and perfection; and all their contentions and rivalries are on being

every one of them more virtuous, more humble and obedient, and this without noise, without divisions, without detractions, but with a holy emulation and envy. It is no small favor and benefit, but a very great one, that the Lord has drawn us to religion, where virtue is favored and esteemed, where the professor or the preacher is not made more of for being a great professor or a great preacher but for being more humble and mortified; where the aim of all is to advance in virtue, and all by their example animate us to make progress. Let us, then, profit by so good an opening for practising this means.

Hence we can derive the second motive, which is the obligation we are under of giving good example to our brethren, "that considering one another all grow in devotion and praise of God our Lord," as our holy Father says. Or rather Christ Himself says so in the Gospel: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, who is in heaven* (Matt. v. 16). Everyone well knows what force good example has to move others. A good religious in a house does more by his good example than any number of conferences and sermons can do, for men are more apt to believe what they see with their eyes than what they hear with their ears. They are persuaded that the thing is practicable which they see another put into act, and thereby are mightily moved and animated to do the like. This is that flapping of the wings of those holy living creatures which Ezechiel beheld (Ezech. iii. 13); when by your example you touch the heart of your brother and move him to compunction and devotion and desire of perfection.

St. Bernard avows that, at his entry into religion, the very sight of some spiritual and edifying religious—nay, even the very remembrance of them when they were absent or dead—brought him so great joy and comfort and filled his soul with such sweetness and devotion that oftentimes tears of joy came into his eyes. So says Holy Scripture in

praise of King Josias: *The memory of Josias is as a box of sweet perfumes* (Ecclus. xlix. 1), comforting and strengthening and raising up the disheartened. Such we ought to endeavor to become, according to the words of the Apostle: *We are the good odor of Christ* (II Cor. ii. 15). We should be like a box of perfumes that freely communicates its sweetness, and comforts and animates all that come near. This should be a great motive to us to give ourselves earnestly to virtue and avoid giving any occasion of disedification to our brethren. For, as an exemplary religious is a great help and enough to edify and raise the tone of a whole house, so a religious who is not what he should be does a deal of harm, harm enough to disedify a whole community and draw them his way, the more so as example is more powerful for evil than for good, owing to our evil inclination to the one rather than to the other.

Almighty God commanded in Deuteronomy that, when the people of Israel were ready to join battle with their enemies, the captains should cause it to be proclaimed throughout the whole army: *Let the cowardly and faint-hearted return home*—and let the reason assigned be noted, as it makes for our purpose—*lest they make cowards of the rest, and infect them with their fear* (Deut. xx. 8). That is what a tepid and lax religious does in religion by his bad example; he makes cowards of the rest where there is question of making an effort and embracing things of perfection: sloth and tepidity are catching. That is how St. Eusebius of Emesa comes to say: “Those who have made up their minds to live in community are either diligent, to the great profit of the community, or negligent, to the great injury and peril of the same.”

We may add a third means and motive to those we have already mentioned; it is the obligation we have of giving good example, not only to our brethren with whom we daily converse, but also to all the world, lest the whole order come to lose its good reputation by reason of the scandal

given by some particular member; for men of the world often judge of all religious by the behavior of one, as if his fault were a sort of original sin, a talent of nature in them all, or were a sample of goods held in common stock. Thus people at once say: "Those of the Society also break rules, or do this or that," for one only whom they see breaking the rule and taking some liberty. Therefore everyone is bound to have an eye to edification, that by this means the reputation of the whole order may be preserved and increased. This obligation is more urgent upon us because we are still at our commencements, and all eyes are turned to us. *We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men* (I Cor. iv. 9); and although they have no reason to impute the fault of one man to a whole order, yet, after all, it is certain that the whole body consists of individuals, and consequently the growth or decay of that body depends upon the good or ill conduct of each individual. Let everyone, therefore, stand firm in his post like a good soldier. Let him take care lest a battalion so strong and well formed come to be broken through his fault; let not relaxation enter into the order through you.

It will be a good reflection for everyone to make account that religion, his mother, says to him those words in which the mother of the Maccabees spoke to her youngest son, encouraging him to suffer and to die for the observance of the law: *My son, have pity on me, who bore thee nine months in my womb, gave thee milk for three years, reared and bred thee to thy present age* (II Mac. vii. 27). "My son, I have borne you, not nine months, but nine years, and twenty years, and thirty years and more; I have given you milk for three years of probation and reared you in virtue and letters at so much cost to myself, till I set you in this state in which you now are. What I ask you in return for all this is to have compassion on me; let me not lose my honor in you, nor bring sorrow in my old age. Turn not against me, nor against yourself, the arms wherewith I

have armed you for your own good and profit and that of your neighbor; let not what should have been an occasion and means of your being more thankful and more humble and mortified become an occasion of your being more vain, unrestrained, and unmortified."

CHAPTER XIV

That It Will Help Us Much Always to Behave As We Did the First Day We Entered Religion

ONE of those ancient monks once asked Abbot Agatho how he should behave in religion. He answered: "See what you were the first day you left the world and were received into the cloister, and such remain always." If, then, you desire to know how to be a good religious and how to advance much in virtue and perfection, this is a good means. Consider with what fervor and fortitude you left the world and all that you had in it—kindred, friends and acquaintance, property, riches, comforts, and amusements—and persevere in that contempt of the world and that forgetfulness of parents and relations, and that casting off of comforts and conveniences; and in that manner you will be a good religious. Consider also with what humility you asked to be received into religion and with what entreaty; and how, the day they granted your request, you thought that heaven was opened to you, and you felt a deep sense of gratitude to God and to your order for so great a boon and benefit; and go on now with this gratitude and humble acknowledgment. Feel now as much obliged and as much indebted as on the first day they received you; and in this manner you will advance in religion. Consider also, after your reception, with what devotion and modesty you behaved at the commencement, with what obedience, with what humility, with what promptitude, with what indifference and resignation in all things; and persevere always

therein, and in this way you will go on thriving and growing in virtue and perfection.

This means is much commended by the saints, as we shall presently see; but it is necessary to understand it well. We do not mean to say that you ought not now to have more virtue than on the first day you entered religion. The veteran should never be content with the virtue of a novice, because it is clear that the veteran should have more virtue and be more advanced than the novice who began yesterday, as in study he who has been at his studies ten years ought to be more advanced and know more than the beginner. Religion is a school of virtue and perfection, and so he who has gone further in the school ought to have learned and advanced more. But just as, speaking to one who began to study with much fervor and great energy and afterwards has grown lazy and slack, we tell him to return to his first fervor and to the care and diligence with which he started at the beginning, and that in this way he will get on with his studies, so what we say now is that you should return to those first fervors with which you started on the way of virtue the very first day that you entered religion. See with what courage and spirit you began then to serve God, so that no obstacle could stand in your way and you made no difficulty about anything, and go on now with that fervor and with that same iron determination and strong resolution, and in this manner you will make great progress in religious life. That is what the saints mean to say of this method.

The blessed St. Anthony, when his disciples asked him to give them some spiritual advice for their improvement, began his discourse with this, as St. Athanasius relates in his Life; "Let this be the first thing of all that I charge you, that none should begin to abate the fervor with which he undertook the journey; but, as if starting afresh, let every one ceaselessly increase what he has begun." And besides many other repetitions of the same, when he was near

death, by way of last will and testament, to impress it more on their hearts, he inculcated it once more in moving words, as the last words of a father: "I, my sons, in Scripture language am going the way of our fathers, since now the Lord calls me, and I desire to see Him in heaven; but you, sons of my heart, I exhort not to lose in a moment the labor of so many years; consider that this day you are starting religious life, and go on ever increasing in the firmness of this resolution." If you desire to progress in virtue and perfection, put this before your eyes every day; and make account that every day you are starting afresh and ever behave as though this was the first day that you had begun, and in this way you will be good religious. St. Augustine also puts this means: "Forget entirely everything that you have done up to this, and make account that every day you are starting anew."

St. Anthony used to explain this by a household example. As the servants and domestics of noblemen, however much they have served their masters and however much they have worked, fail not to put their hands to any new business that offers and stand ever as ready and prepared to do what they are bidden as they were the first day they entered service, as though they had done no service or work up to this; so, he said, we ought to serve God our Creator and Lord. We have a good example of this in the glorious St. Bernard. Surius relates in his *Life* that he reckoned others for saints and perfect men, and thought that as people advanced and moved far ahead in perfection they might be allowed sundry indulgences and licenses in sundry things. This is an excellent way not to make rash judgments of others when we see them doing anything of that sort. But for himself, he said that he always held himself for a beginner and novice, and that these licenses and exemptions did not befit him, and so he missed no point of the rigor of religious life nor of the common labors and exercises of humility. He was the first in all works of

obedience and the first to put his hand to the broom and the dish-cloth. In no point did he seek exemption or excuse from doing as others; but when others were doing any manual work, and he did not know how to do it, then not to lose the occasion he managed to do something else instead and busied himself in some still more humble and lowly occupation. Sometimes he would take a pickax and set himself to turn up the ground, or a hatchet, and would cut wood and carry the pieces on his back to the kitchen; and he greatly rejoiced to occupy himself in such exercises, and thought that he had need of all this for his improvement! He was not like some who, when they do these things, say: "Just for example's sake;" because they think that they do not need them, nor that this does any good in their case. It is well that you do it for the sake of example and edification, but it would be better for you to consider that you also have need of it, since St. Bernard thought that he had such need.

St. Anthony here adds another good point that further explains what has gone before. The saint is not content with our not going back upon those first fervors with which we commenced, but wishes us always to be going on and advancing and growing more and more. As he who begins anew to serve God makes it his care every day to advance and grow in that service, seeing that hitherto all has been offences and sins, thereby to make up for the past and render himself worthy of the reward and prize; so we ought always to proceed like one who has attained nothing up to this, but has been a spendthrift and a squanderer.

This means, says St. Gregory, is suitable to all, even though they be very perfect; for the Prophet David was a perfect man and yet he said, like a beginner, *Today I have begun* (Psalm lxxvi. 11). He went on with as much fervor and diligence in the service of the Lord in extreme old age as though he would then begin anew to serve Him, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *When a man shall*

have finished, then he shall begin (Ecclus. xviii. 6). The true servants of God, the farther they go and the nearer they approach to the goal and to perfection, make their way with greater care and fervor, *like men digging out a treasure*, as Job says (iii. 21). As those who are seeking a treasure by digging, says St. Gregory, the more they dig and the deeper they go, give themselves to the work with greater diligence because, understanding that the hidden treasure they seek is getting nearer and that they want but a little to strike upon it, they are thereby animated to labor more vigorously, and dig with greater zest and eagerness; so those who are really working at their own improvement and perfection, the farther they go on and the nearer they come to the end, throw themselves into the work with greater energy: "Oh, since the treasure is now near, let us animate ourselves and make an effort, since now little is wanting to reach it." *And that the more, as you see the day coming nigh*, as the Apostle says (Heb. x. 25); meaning, as St. Gregory says, that we should work harder, the nearer the reward and the prize. When a stone is moving in a downward direction, the nearer it approaches its center, the greater becomes its velocity and speed till it arrives; so when a man goes on advancing in virtue and perfection and is getting nearer and nearer to God, Who is his center and last end, the more energy he puts forth finally to arrive. These, St. Basil says, are they whom St. Paul calls *in carefulness not slothful, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord* (Rom. xii. 11). There are some who in their commencements, when they enter religion, start with fervor, and on leaving the novitiate at once slacken off and play the ancient; these are not *fervent in spirit*, but tepid and lazy. The fervent in spirit are they who go on ever as on the first day, with an ardent desire and an insatiable hunger, never glutted nor weary with the service of God, but ever desirous of serving Him more and more, according to the word of the prophet: *In thy commandments he shall delight exceedingly* (Psalm cxi. 1).

CHAPTER XV

*That It Will Be a Great Help for Everyone to Ask Himself
Frequently: "What Did You Enter Religion for?"*

ANOTHER practice also will help us very much to grow in virtue and attain perfection; it is that which St. Bernard used, as Surius relates in his Life. He carried it ever in his head and often spoke to himself, saying: "Bernard, Bernard, for what hast thou come into religion?"—*Bernarde, ad quid venisti?* We read the same of the holy Abbot Arsenius, who often asked himself the same question: "Arsenius, Arsenius, for what hast thou come?" He often took account of himself. "Arsenius, why hast thou left the world? What was thy end and intention in leaving it and betaking thyself to religion? Was it not that therein thou mightest succeed in pleasing God entirely, and not trouble thyself about pleasing and satisfying men nor about standing high in their esteem? Take care of this, then, and make no account of the opinion and esteem of men. That would be going back to the world which thou hast left. Do not return to it in heart; little will it avail thee to be here in religion in body, if in heart thou art in the world, desiring the applause and esteem of men." With these thoughts those saints aroused and animated themselves greatly. We, too, should arouse and animate ourselves with the same, to go forward and overcome all difficulties that we meet with in religion. When you feel difficulty in any order of obedience, arouse yourself with these words: "For what purpose have you come into religion? Was it, perchance, to do your own will? Certainly not, but to follow the will of another. Why, then, do you wish to do your own?" When you feel any effect of poverty, you should animate yourself with this: "Did you, perchance, come here to seek your own conveniences, to have everything completely to your satisfaction, and to want nothing? Know

you not that you have come to be poor, and to suffer need like a real poor man? Why have you to complain of then?" When you think that people do not make enough of you, animate and console yourself with this reflection: "Did you, perchance, come to religion to be regarded and esteemed? Certainly not, but to be forgotten of men, and to despise the opinion and esteem of the world. Why do you refuse what you have come for, and seek to return to what you have left?" This it is to be a religious—not to do your own will, to be poor, to suffer need, to seek to be forgotten and disregarded. This it is to be dead to the world and live to God.

For this we came into religion, and little will it profit us to be therein if we do not that for which we came; for it is not the place that makes saints, but a religious and perfect life. St. Augustine says this very well in a sermon that he gave to the religious who dwelt in the desert: "You see, brethren, here we are in solitude; we have left the world and are in religion. But it is not the place that makes holy the inhabitants, but good works—a religious life that will make the place holy and us also. Alas, holy as the place may be, and however strict the enclosure of religion, still you may sin there, and this means damnation. Trust not in that," says St. Augustine, "since the angel sinned in heaven, and Adam in paradise, and there was no place holier than those. The place does not make people holy; if the place were sufficient for that, neither the angel would have fallen from heaven, nor man from paradise." So do not think that you have done your business and are master of the field when you can say: "I am a religious; I am a member of the Society." That is not enough unless you do that for which you came to religion. See that you did not come to be a good student, or a learned graduate, or a good teacher but to be a good religious and aim at perfection. Oh, how very little it matters whether you turn out more or less of a scholar, or whether you turn out a great or a middling

preacher! What does matter, what makes all the difference, is that you turn out a good and perfect religious. What *are* we doing, if we are not doing that? And what have we done all this while, if we have not done that? To what have we applied our minds if we have not applied them to that for which we came hither? My friend, my brother, whereunto art thou come? *Amice, ad quid venisti?* (Matt. xxvi. 50).

Take account of yourself and often ask yourself this question: "Ah, my God, what art or trade might I not have learned all these years I have been in the Society, and come out well in it by this time! If I had set myself to a painter, I should by this time have painted well; if to an embroiderer, I should know how to use my needle so cleverly as to gain my livelihood thereby. I have set myself to be a good religious and have not succeeded at that. So many years I have been going to the school of virtue and I have not yet learned the A B C of it. I have not yet attained the first degree of humility. Others become good philosophers and good theologians in seven years' time; and I, after so many years, have not become a good religious." Oh, if we sought and aimed at true virtues with as much care and diligence as we aim at learning!

St. Bernard says: "Many look to science, but few to conscience. If a good conscience were looked to with as much zeal and solicitude as vain and secular science is sought, it would be at once more speedily attained and more usefully retained"—*Multi quaerunt scientiam, pauci vero conscientiam. Si vero tanto studio et solitudine quaereretur conscientia quanto quaeritur saecularis et vana scientia, et citius apprehenderetur et utilius retineretur.*

It were only fair that we should take as much care and pains over our spiritual progress as we do over our studies. St. Dorotheus says that he found this consideration a great help: "When I was a student in the world, I took my studies so much to heart that I remembered and thought of

nothing else, not even of my dinner, and it seemed I had no time to think of what I had to eat, so much so that had it not been for my companion and very dear friend who took care to provide me with something to eat and to call me at dinner-time, often I would have forgotten to eat. The vehement desire that I had to learn went so far that, when I was at table, I had my book always open before me, that I might eat and study at the same time; and at night, when I came from school, I at once lit my candle and studied till midnight; and when I lay down to sleep, I took my book to bed, and after I had slept awhile, I fell to reading again, and was so wholly taken up with this passion for study that I could take no delight in anything else. Since I came to be a religious man, I have often reflected and said to myself: 'If thou wert hereto so ardent in thy desires to acquire eloquence and human letters, what great pains and care oughtest thou not to take now in order to acquire true virtues and true wisdom, seeing that thou art come here for no other purpose?' And from this thought I gathered no little strength."

Let us, then, rouse and animate ourselves also with this consideration, that it is of greater concern for us to be good religious than to be good students and good men of letters. All our solicitude and diligence ought to be how to attain to this divine wisdom; that should be our business. The Son of God had no other business on earth but to occupy Himself in loving us and seeking our advancement and greater good, and that at so much cost to Himself. And shall we think it much to have no other business here but to occupy ourselves in loving and pleasing God and seeking and procuring His greater glory? *Wherefore lift up your hands that hang down as if tired, and brace up your loose knees* (Heb. xii. 12). Abandoning tepidity and sloth, let us put trifles aside and quicken our pace. *Let us make haste to enter into that rest* (Heb. iv. 11). Let us push on and cover the ground to climb the mountain of perfection and

glory, *even to the mountain of God, Horeb* (III Kings xix. 8). And as a traveler that has slept till late in the morning makes haste to repair the time he has lost, by mending his pace till he overtake his company that has gone ahead, so should we make haste and never stop in our course till we have recovered the time we have lost by our negligence. Oh, how my companions and brothers have gone ahead, and I alone am left behind, notwithstanding that I began my journey first and entered into religion before them! Oh, that we regretted so much the time we have lost hitherto, and felt it so much that it might serve us as a spur to run henceforth with great ardor!

Denis the Carthusian relates an incident taken from the lives of the ancient Fathers. There was a youth who wanted to enter religion, but his mother endeavored to thwart his good purpose and brought up many reasons, to all of which the young man simply answered: "I want to save my soul" —*Salvare volo animam meam*. At last, as she could do nothing with him, she let him go and he entered religion. But after a while his fervor cooled down and he began to live very carelessly. Then it came to pass that his mother died, and he fell dangerously ill. In a trance he was carried before the judgment seat of God and saw his mother, with many others, expecting sentence of condemnation. His mother, turning her eyes, saw her son in the ranks of those who were to be condemned, and in amazement cried out: "Son, hast thou come to this? What has become of those words: 'I want to save my soul'?" He felt so ashamed that he did not know what to answer. He came out of the trance, and it pleased God that he should get better. He took the vision as a warning from God, and changed so much that he was wholly given over to bewailing the past and doing penance. Many people endeavored to persuade him to moderate and abate some part of his austerities, lest he should destroy his health by them, but he rejected all their advice, saying: "If I could not suffer the reproaches

of my mother, how shall I suffer those of Christ and His holy angels on the day of judgment?"

CHAPTER XVI

Of Some Other Things That Will Help Us to Go On in Self-Improvement and Gain Perfection

BE ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect (Matt. v. 48), says Christ our Redeemer in that sovereign Sermon on the Mount. St. Cyprian on these words says: "If to men it is matter of exultation and glory to have sons like themselves, and then they rejoice, more and more glad at having become fathers when they see that in features, air, and demeanor and in all things their children are in the likeness of their parents, how much more will our heavenly Father be glad and rejoice when He sees that His spiritual sons are coming out like Himself! What a palm of victory, what a reward, what a crown, what a glory, think you, will it be that you should be such that God may not have to complain of you: *I have begotten sons, and reared them and exalted them, and they have dishonored me* (Isaias i. 2)"—but that you should be such that your works may redound to the great glory and honor of your heavenly Father! This is the great glory of God, to have sons so like Him that through them He comes to be known, honored, and glorified.

But how shall we be like our heavenly Father? St. Augustine tells us: We shall be like God in proportion as we partake of His justice and holiness; the more just and perfect we are, the more we shall resemble our heavenly Father. Therefore does the Lord so much desire us to be holy and perfect, and reminds us of it and repeats it frequently—sometimes by St. Paul: *This is the will of God, your sanctification* (I Thess. iv. 3); sometimes by St. Matthew: *Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect* (Matt. v. 48); at other times by the Apostle St. Peter: *Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy* (I Pet. i. 16;

Levit. xi. 44). This is the will of our heavenly Father. It is a great satisfaction to parents to have good, wise, and holy children. *A wise son, says Solomon, is the joy of his father; and, contrariwise, a foolish and worthless son is the sorrow of his mother* (Prov. x. 1). For this reason, if there were no other, we should endeavor to give ourselves to virtue and perfection, to give satisfaction to God. This should ever be the principal motive of all our actions, the satisfaction of God and His greater honor and glory.

Besides this, we will mention sundry other motives to aid and animate us thereto. St. Augustine says that the reason why Holy Scripture calls us so many times *sons of God*—*I will be your Father, and you shall be my sons*—and why the prophets so often repeat it, and the Apostle St. Paul: *Be ye imitators of God, as most dear sons* (Eph. v. 1); and the Apostle St. John: *See what great love the Father hath for us, granting us to be called and to be sons of God* (I John iii. 1), and in many other places—the reason, he says, of this frequent repetition is to induce us, seeing and considering our dignity and excellence, to value ourselves and watch over ourselves with greater care and diligence. A rich dress is kept with much solicitude, and great care is taken that no stain fall upon it. A precious stone and other rich articles are kept with greater care. We should keep with great care what we have received and call ourselves to great account for it. That is why, as St. Augustine says, Holy Scripture so often puts before us the fact that we are sons of God and that God Himself is our Father, to the end that we may behave as His sons whose sons we are and not fall away or degenerate from the high and generous thoughts of sons of God.

Pope St. Leo agrees, saying: “Recognize your dignity; remember that you are a son of God and do nothing unworthy of the nobility and high birth of such a son”—*Divinae consors factus naturae noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire: memento cuius capitis et cuius cor-*

poris sis membrum. St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles sets this before the Athenians to animate and raise them to higher things: *for we are of divine lineage, being of divine lineage, etc.* (Acts xvii. 28). To apply that to ourselves, and keep up the example which St. Augustine gives of the dress: as any stain looks very ugly on a rich dress, and the richer the stuff, the more unsightly does it appear—on brocade or gold lace a stain is a great disfigurement, but on sackcloth it is not seen and no account is taken of it—so in them who live there in the world the stain of a venial sin is not noticed, and oftentimes even of a mortal sin, and no account is taken of it, sad to say; but in religious, who are the cherished and petted sons of God, any stain and any imperfection is conspicuous and strikes the eye—a want of modesty, a slight murmuring, an impatient and angry word, gives great offence and disedification here, whereas among men of the world it is taken no notice of. Dust on the feet is no consideration, but on the eyes and in the pupils of the eyes it is a considerable matter, and very much so. Worldly people are as the feet of this body of the Church; religious are as the eyes and pupils of the eyes; thus any fault in a religious is very considerable, because it takes off the gilding and causes great unsightliness in him, and therefore he is bound very carefully to guard against anything of the sort.

Another helpful means of self-improvement we have touched on above; it is to understand that we have still a long way to go and that what we hold and have gained hitherto is as nothing. This means also is suggested to us by the text quoted before. Why, think you, does Christ our Redeemer say: *Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect?* (Matt. v. 48). Can we possibly attain to the perfection of our heavenly Father? *Can man possibly appear just in comparison with God?* (Job iv. 17). No, certainly, not by thousands of miles; how ever much we advance, there will always be an infinite distance between us and

Him. Yet He tells us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, to give us to understand that on this road of virtue we must ever be moving on and never be content with what we have got, but labor for what is still wanting. Saints commonly say, and very rightly, that there is no surer sign of a man's being far from perfection than his thinking that he has already attained it; for on this marvelous road, the farther a man journeys, the more ground he sees still before him to cover, and how much is wanting to him.

St. Bonaventure says that, as the higher a man climbs a mountain, the more ground he sees, so the nearer a man approaches the summit of this mountain of perfection, the more it opens out upon him for further exertion. It is a common experience, in looking at a high mountain from afar, to fancy that it reaches the sky and that from thence we could touch the sky with our hand; but as we go on with our journey and reach the top, we find that the sky is much higher than that. So on this road of perfection and knowledge and love of God, *Man shall ascend to a high heart, and God shall be exalted still higher* (Psalm lxiii. 7-8). So St. Cyprian explains this passage, that the higher we mount in the knowledge of God, the higher God remains. However much you know of God, there is much more to know; and however much you love Him, there is much more to love. There is always room to mount on this road of perfection; and if anyone thinks that he has reached and gained perfection, it is because he is far off and so fancies that he could touch the sky with his hand.

This may be also understood from what we see in earthly sciences. The more a man knows, the better he appreciates the shortcomings of his knowledge. And so that philosopher said: "The only thing that I know is that I know nothing." And a great musician used to say sadly that he knew nothing, because he seemed to himself to descry such vast fields of knowledge as he could never attain or

understand. So is this knowledge of God. The servants of God who have studied and made much progress therein know well how much is wanting to them for the attainment of perfection. And this is the reason why the farther a man advances, the humbler he is, partly because as one grows in other virtues, one grows also in humility and self-knowledge and self-contempt, all these things going together; and again because the more light and appreciation a man has of the goodness and majesty of God, the deeper becomes his knowledge of his own misery and nothingness. *Abyss cries to abyss* (Psalm xli. 8), the great abyss of the knowledge of God and of His goodness and infinite majesty discovers to us the depths of our own misery; and by the beams of this divine light we come to see the specks and motes of our imperfections and how much we still want of being perfect. The novice and the beginner sometimes fancies that he has now got virtue; that is because he does not know how much he is wanting in it. A man that has little or no skill in painting, when he sees a picture, admires it at once and discovers no fault; a good painter comes along, looks at it attentively, and discovers many faults. The same falls here; you are not master of the art of self-knowledge, and therefore fail to see the faults there are in this picture of your soul; whereas another, who is better skilled in that art, sees them very well. Let all this serve to inflame us with a desire of acquiring that virtue we still want, for *blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice* (Matt. v. 6); that is to say, as St. Jerome explains it, they who, however just they are, are never satisfied and never think their present estate enough, but hunger continually after more virtue and perfection, as did the Prophet David when he said and begged of God: *Lord, wash me yet more and more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins*. I am not content with being cleansed and washed of my sins; I am not content with being white, but I would fain that Thou wouldst make me white as snow and whiter

even than snow. *Thou shalt sprinkle with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow* (Psalm l. 9). Thus we should cry and raise our voices to God: "Lord, give me more humility, more patience, more charity, more mortification, more indifference and resignation!" *Wash me yet more.*

CHAPTER XVII

Of the Perseverance We Ought to Have in Virtue, and What Will Aid Us Thereto

ST. AUGUSTINE, on the words of St. Paul: *No one is crowned, but he who lawfully fighteth* (II Tim ii. 5), says that to fight lawfully is to fight with perseverance to the end, and that he it is who deserves to be crowned who does this. St. Jerome also says: "Many enter on the way of virtue and perfection, but few persevere in it to the end"—*Coepisse multorum est; ad culmen pervenisse paucorum.*

There went out of Egypt, says Holy Writ (Num. i. 1-47; xiv. 29-30), six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, and of all that number two only entered the Land of Promise. Thus it is no great thing to begin well; the difficulty is not there, but in persevering and ending well. St. Ephrem says that as when you build a house, the difficulty is not in laying the foundation, but in raising the building to its perfect height; and the higher the building is raised, the more the labor and expenses increase: so in the spiritual building, the hardest task is not to lay the foundation, but to carry your work on to perfection; it will avail us nothing to have begun well, unless we also end well. "In Christians," says St. Jerome, "we consider not how they begin, but how they end. St. Paul began ill, but ended well; Judas began well, but ended ill." What did it avail him to have been an apostle of Christ and to have worked miracles? What will your good beginnings profit

you if you come to a bad end? It is to perseverance alone that the crown is promised. *He who shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved* (Matt. xxiv. 13). Jacob saw Almighty God not at the foot, nor in the middle, but at the top of the ladder; to let us know, says St. Jerome, that "it is not enough to begin well, nor yet to go on doing well only for a time, unless we hold on and persevere to the end." St. Bernard says: "Put the term of your journey and perseverance where Christ put it, of whom St. Paul says: *He was obedient unto death* (Phil. ii. 8); because however far you run, if it be not unto death, you will not gain the crown."

Christ our Redeemer gives us a special warning of this in the holy Gospel: *Whosoever setteth his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven* (Luke ix. 62). As also when at another time He bids us *remember Lot's wife* (Luke xvii. 32). What was it she did? God having brought her out of Sodom in order to save her from the fire that consumed the city, she stopped upon the way and turned to look behind her, and immediately, in the very place where she turned her head, she was changed into a statue of salt. What does that signify? Do you know what? St. Augustine says: "Salt seasons and preserves things; and therefore our Savior would have us remember Lot's wife to the end that, looking upon what happened to her, we may preserve ourselves with that salt, and take warning therefrom to persevere in the way of goodness that we have entered upon, and not turn back, for fear lest we also be turned into statues of salt, from whence others may take salt for their preservations and perseverance, seeing our fall. How many do we see nowadays who serve us only for statues of salt, for our preservation! Let us, then, be wise at other men's cost and do nothing to make other men wise at ours.

St. Augustine and St. Jerome further add that to begin well and end ill is to make monsters, since those works and actions which begin by being good according to reason and

end in evil and sensuality, are grotesque figures, as if a painter to the head of a man should add the neck of a horse; such a thing it is to begin well and end badly. With this St. Paul reproaches the people of Galatia who had gone back: *Are ye so senseless that, having begun in the spirit, ye are ending in the flesh? Who hath bewitched you?* (Gal. iii. 3).

That we should be able to persevere and obtain this reward from the Lord, it is necessary to take care to establish ourselves well in virtue and mortification, lest for want of solid foundation we come to deteriorate and fall. Worm-eaten apples quickly fall and never ripen, but the good and sound ones remain on the tree until they come to maturity. In the same manner, if your virtue be not solid and your heart be vain; if there be within it some little worm of presumption, or pride, or impatience, or other irregular passion, that worm will by degrees gnaw away and consume all the pith of it and weaken the substance and rigor of your virtue and endanger your perseverance. The Apostle says: *It is very important to confirm and fortify your heart by grace* (Heb. xiii. 9) with true and solid virtues.

Albertus Magnus well explains how we should be well grounded in virtues so as to be able to continue and persevere in them. He says that a true servant of God ought to be so grounded in virtue and have it so deep fixed in his heart, as to have it always in his power to practise it and not depend upon what others may do and say. There are a sort of people that seem to be humble and very peaceable so long as nothing thwarts them and all things happen to their liking; but upon the least cross accident that occurs, this peace vanishes and they come out in their true colors and show what they are. In this case, says Albertus, this virtue of peace and humility is not in them, but in the people about them. It is the virtue of others and not yours, because they take it away and make you a present of it when they please. This is being good by the virtue of another, as people in the world say when they are praised:

"So it shall be by our favor, sir." And they say true. [*Eso será para virtual de vuestra merced*; i.e., "My merits are your kindness;" i.e., "It is very kind of you to make me out so."] You ought to be good, not by another's virtue but by your own virtue, the virtue that is in yourself and does not depend on others. These people are well compared to still cesspools; if you let them alone, they emit no bad smell: but if you stir them up, they are unendurable. Thus people, so long as you do not touch them but let them go on according to the taste of their own palate, seem clear water; but stir them up a little, and you will see what an odor they send forth. *Touch the mountains, and they will smoke* (Psalm cxliii. 5).

CHAPTER XVIII

Of Another Means to Advance in Virtue; Namely, Spiritual Exhortations and Conferences, and How to Profit by Them

AMONG other means which a religious order and our Society in particular provides to aid and animate its subjects to advance in virtue and perfection, spiritual conferences and exhortations, concerning which we have a rule, hold a chief place. Accordingly we shall say something of the way how to profit by them, which may serve to help all the world to profit by the sermons which they hear. In the first place, it will help much to this end not to go to exhortations by routine and for form's sake, but with a sincere desire of profiting and getting good by them. Let us consider with what eager longings those Fathers of the Desert met for those spiritual collections and conferences which they held, and what good store of provision they took from thence back to their cells. With the like eagerness and desire should we go to exhortations, and then they will turn to our profit; as, when a man goes to dinner with a good

appetite, it then appears that what he eats is likely to do him good. St. Chrysostom observes that, as hunger is a sign of the body's being in good health, so a longing desire of being nourished with the word of God is a sign of a good and happy disposition of the soul. But if you do not hunger after the divine word nor find any relish in it, it is a bad sign, and shows that you are sick, since you have lost your appetite and your soul loathes this spiritual food. If for no other reason, the mere thought of hearing a little speech and discourse of God should be enough to make us go to these conferences with great relish and delight, for naturally a man is glad to hear another speak well of one he loves, as a father to hear of his son. If you loved God, you would delight to hear Him spoken of. So Christ our Redeemer says: *He who is of God, heareth the Word of God, and the reason why ye desire not to hear it, is because ye are not of God* (John viii. 47).

Secondly, if we intend to draw benefit from these discourses, we must not hear them in a spirit of curiosity, marking the good language, the graceful action and pronunciation, the quaint and new conceits of the preacher. It is this that with great reason we blame in secular persons, and this is why nowadays many profit so little by sermons. We should turn away our eyes from that and fix them on the substance of what is said. What should we say of a sick man whom the barber-surgeon comes to bleed, and he, instead of letting himself be bled, takes to admiring the instruments. "Oh, what a neat lancet!" "Oh, what a pretty razor!" "Oh, what an elegant sheath; where was it made?" Leave that alone, and let yourself be bled: that is your business; the rest is no affair of yours.

The like do they who neglect the substance of what is said, which is what they stand in need of, and occupy themselves with the words, the plan and artifice of the discourse. Such people may aptly be compared to a sieve or bolter, which retains only the chaff and bean and lets all the corn

and meal pass through. The Second Book of Esdras says that, when Esdras read the law of God to the people of Israel, such was their emotion and so loud their lamentations and groans, comparing their doings and life with the law which they heard, that the Levites had to go about pacifying them and proclaiming silence, to enable the reader to continue. It is in this way that exhortations and sermons should be heard, with confusion and compunction of heart, considering how different we are from the standard they put before us and how far we are from the perfection there proposed.

In the third place, and by way of confirmation of what has gone before, all should understand that these exhortations are not for the saying of new and extraordinary things, but to bring to mind common and ordinary things, things that we have daily in hand, and to warm our hearts to them. We should go to them on this understanding; and thus casting aside all curiosity, we shall profit more by them. To this end our Father expressly orders that these discourses be given in our Society. "Let there be someone," he says, "who every week, or at least every fortnight, shall deliver these and the like admonitions, lest by the weakness of our nature things be forgotten and their execution dropped." By the way, Father Master Nadal notes here in his Observations on the Constitutions, that though the Constitution uses the disjunctive, "every week, *or* at least every fortnight," nevertheless it is the universal custom of the Society that this is not put off for a fortnight, but is done every week. The Society has taken the better course, and no one could say this better than Nadal, since he had visited almost the whole Society and knew well the universal custom of the same. These discourses are to refresh the memory of what we know, because we easily forget what is good and need to have it told to us again and again. And even though we hold it in memory, yet we must have it cried out to us to quicken our will and desire,

telling us of our obligation and profession and what we have come to religion for. True is that saying of St. Augustine: "The understanding flies before, but little or no movement of the heart follows"—*Praevolat intellectus; sequitur tardus vel nullus affectus*. Therefore it is necessary to say the same thing many times over, as did St. Paul to the Philippians: *For the rest, brethren, rejoice in the Lord: to write to you the same thing is no trouble to me, and is necessary for you* (Phil. iii. 1). The Apostle was in no want of things to say—he who had been raised to the third heaven could tell them things new and exquisite; but he felt himself obliged to say and repeat the same things that he had already said, because that was more necessary for them. And this should be the particular aim of him who gives these exhortations and of him who preaches sermons, not to say what promises to make him appear more learned and erudite—for that would be to preach of himself—but what promises best for the benefit of his hearers; and this is what the hearers also themselves should look for. Thus they will not wax weary of hearing common things that they know, for they will see that they do them not, or anyhow do them not with such perfection as they ought.

Fourthly, it will be of very great profit that whatever is said in exhortations be received by each one as particularly addressed to himself and not as a thing said for the benefit of others. Let us not act herein as worldly persons ordinarily do when they hear a sermon. A great teacher used to say: "All you who hear me are like carvers, for all the business of the carver is to cut up for others and take nothing for himself. So you, when you hear me, say: 'Oh, what a good point for Dick! Oh, how that will come home to Harry! Oh, if that neighbor of mine were here, how it would meet his case!' and you keep nothing for yourselves. I want guests, not carvers of the word of God." *Every wise word that the prudent man shall hear, says Ecclesiasticus (xxi. 18), he will approve and take to himself; but the*

vicious and vain is displeased with it, and throweth it over his shoulders. Let us, then, be wise and let everyone take what is said as said for him, as if it were said for him alone and he alone were being spoken to and no other. Possibly, what seems to come home well to another will come home better to yourself; we often see the mote in our neighbor's eye and see not the beam in our own (Matt. vii. 3). This especially because, though at present you feel not that the point touches you, you should store it up for afterwards, when you will find the need of it, and that perhaps very soon. Thus you should always take what is said as said for you alone.

In the fifth place, better to clear up what we have said, it is highly proper that all should understand and always take for granted that, when a thing is mentioned or reprehended in these addresses, it is not as implying that the mischief is already in the house, but simply that it may never come to be there. Preventive and preservative medicine is much better than what is given for the cure of a malady already broken out. And this is what we do in these exhortations, according to the counsel of the Wise Man: *Apply the medicine before the illness* (Ecclus. xviii. 20). We apply the medicine and the remedy before the sickness comes, exhorting to what is good and censuring what is evil, that no one may come to fall into what he knows already for a thing evil and dangerous. Thus it would be a great fault to form such a judgment as: "This is said for our friend John," and still more to utter it. The speaker does not intend to note any one in particular—for that would not be prudent nor profitable, but would rather do harm. So to pass such a judgment would be to condemn the giver of the exhortation of doing a thing that would be very ill done.

But, although this circumspection and care should be observed on the part of him who preaches or gives the conference, yet on the part of the listener it will be very well for everyone to take what is said as said for himself and for

himself alone. Not that he should understand that it was the speaker's purpose to point to him and mark him out, for that would be wrong, as we have said, but that everyone in the audience should begin listening with his hand on his breast; and, comparing his actions and life with what he hears, should say: "Truly all this is addressed to me; I stand in great need of it; God has put it into his mouth for my benefit;" for from this much fruit will be gained. From the conversation that Christ our Redeemer held with the Samaritan woman the holy Gospel says that she went away crying out and saying: *Come and see a man who hath told me all that hath befallen me* (John iv. 29). When the preacher speaks to his audience and tells them what passes in their souls, then the sermon and conference is a good one, and it is that which satisfies them and does them good.

Sixthly, it is necessary that we should understand the word of God to be the food and sustenance of the soul; and so we should always contrive to gather something from conferences and sermons to keep and preserve in our heart, to strengthen and sustain us for subsequent action. On these words of Christ: *The good soil on which the seed falls are they who with a good heart and good disposition hear and receive the word of God, and bear fruit of good works in patience*, St. Gregory says that, as it is a grave and dangerous infirmity for a man not to retain in his stomach the bodily food which he eats, but cast it up at once, so is it not to retain in one's heart the word of God that one hears, but it comes in at one ear and goes out at the other. The prophet says: *I have hidden away, O Lord, and guarded thy words in my heart, not to sin* (Psalm cxviii. 11), to resist temptations, to rouse myself to virtue and perfection. How often does it happen that one is under temptation and in some danger, and one remembers some text of Holy Scripture or some other good thing that one has heard and thereupon one is strengthened and animated and feels much benefit! With three texts of Holy Scripture Christ our

Redeemer overcame and routed the three temptations with which the devil assailed Him (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10).

From what has been said it will be seen how reprehensible they are who go to conferences and sermons for form's sake, or are there sleeping, or distracted and thinking of other things, which comes to the same as sleeping. The holy Gospel says: *The devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, that they may not be saved* (Luke viii. 12) or profit thereby. These are the birds of prey that devour the grain that it may not spring up. Possibly that word which you lost when you were asleep or distracted was a means to your improvement; and the devil, for the envy that he bears to your good, contrives in all the ways that he can that it may not take root in your heart. St. Augustine says that the word of God is like a fishhook, that takes when it is taken. As when the fish takes the hook it is caught and held thereby, so when you take and receive the word of God, you are taken and held by it. That is why the devil labors so much to draw off your attention, that you may not apprehend what is said, that you may not be held by it, and that it may not gain any hold on your heart. Let us, then, make it our endeavor to go to conferences and sermons with due dispositions and so to hear the word of God that it may take hold on our heart and bear fruit. The Apostle St. James says: *Be ye not hearers only of the word of God, but doers*. Do not deceive yourselves by thinking that you fulfil all you ought by listening, for *he that heareth the word of God and doeth it not is like a man who looketh at his own face in a looking-glass, and presently goeth away and forgetteth his form and figure* (James i. 22-23). They alone shall be justified who put things into execution; for, as St. Paul says, *it is not the hearers of the law that shall be accounted just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified* (Rom. ii. 13).

In the "Spiritual Meadow," which was composed by John Eviratus, or according to others, by St. Sophronius, Patri-

arch of Jerusalem, and was approved in the Second Council of Nicaea, [and Theodoret has the story in his "Religious History," which see] it is related that one day a holy man named Eusebius was sitting with another named Amianus, reading a book of the Gospels. Amianus read and the other explained as he went on. Now it happened that some laborers were working on the land in a field. Eusebius was distracted by looking at them, and did not attend to the reading. Then Amianus, having a doubt about a passage he was reading, asked Eusebius to explain it. Eusebius, as he had not been attending, asked him to read it again. Amianus saw he had been distracted and reproved him, saying: "No wonder you did not notice, as you should have done, the words of the Gospel; you were amusing yourself, watching those laborers." When Eusebius heard this reproof, he was so ashamed of himself that he gave command to his eyes that at no time should they find satisfaction in looking at any sight, not even at the stars of heaven. Thence he took a narrow path homewards and shut himself up in a hut and never went out of it again for all the rest of his life. In this strait prison he lived for forty years and more, until he died. And that necessity as well as reason might compel him to keep quiet, he bound himself by the loins with a girdle of iron, and with another heavier cincture about his neck. To these cinctures of iron he fastened a chain, and the chain he fastened to the ground, so that he was forced to remain bent and could not go freely, nor look on any sight, not even on the stars of heaven. In this way the servant of God punished himself for one inadvertence and distraction that happened at the exposition of the word of God—to our confusion who make so little account of the many distractions that we have.

SECOND TREATISE

ON THE PERFECTION OF OUR ORDINARY ACTIONS



CHAPTER I

That Our Advancement and Perfection Consists in Doing Ordinary Actions Extraordinarily Well

THOU shalt go justly about what is just, says the Lord to His people (Deut. xvi. 20) : what is good and just, do it well, justly, and in knightly fashion. The business of our advancement and perfection does not consist in doing things, but in doing them well; as neither does it consist in being a religious, but in being a good religious. Paulinus made much of St. Jerome's living in the Holy Places, where Christ our Lord wrought the mysteries of our redemption; and St. Jerome wrote back to him: "It is not the living in Jerusalem that is praiseworthy, but the living well in Jerusalem." Which saying afterwards became a proverb to warn religious not to be content with being in religion, because, as the habit does not make the monk, so neither does the place, but a good and holy life. The point is not being a religious, but being a good religious; not doing the exercises of religious life, but doing them well. All our good consists in what the Evangelist St. Mark relates that the people said of Christ: *He hath done all things well* (Mark vii. 37).

It is certain that all our good and all our evil depends on our works according as they are good or evil, for we ourselves shall be such as our works have been. They tell what each man is made of, for by the fruit the tree is known. St. Augustine says that the man is the tree, and the works the fruit that it bears; and thus by the fruit of works it is known what each man is. And therefore Christ our Redeemer said of those hypocrites and false preachers: *By the fruit of their works ye shall know what they are* (Matt. vii. 20). And, contrariwise, He says of Himself:

The works that I do give testimony of me; if ye will not believe me, believe my works, for they tell who I am (John x. 25, 38). And our works tell not only what each one is in this life, but also what he must be in the next; for we shall be such forever in the life to come as our works have been in this; for God our Lord will recompense and reward everyone according to his works. As is often said in Holy Writ, as well in the Old as in the New Testament: *Thou, O Lord, says the psalmist, wilt render to everyone according to his works* (Psalm lxi. 13); and St. Paul: *What a man soweth, the same shall he reap.*

But let us descend to particulars and see what those works are upon which all our good and all our advancement and perfection depend. I say these are no other than our common and ordinary actions, such as we go through every day. In holding to it that that ordinary meditation which we make be well made, in making those examens that we make well made, in hearing mass and saying it as we ought, in reciting our hours and other devotions with deference and attention, in exercising ourselves continually in penance and mortification, in doing our office and the duty laid upon us by obedience so that it be well done, in this rests our advancement and perfection. If we do these actions perfectly, we shall be perfect; if we do them imperfectly, we shall be imperfect. And this is the difference between a good and perfect religious and an imperfect and tepid one; the difference lies not in the doing of more or different things in this case and in that, but in doing what one does perfectly or imperfectly. For this reason is the one a good and perfect religious, that he gets these things well done; and for this, is the other imperfect, that he does them with much tepidity and negligence. And the more a man lays himself out and goes forward in this particular, the more perfect or imperfect will he be.

In that parable of the sower who went out to sow his seed, the holy Gospel says that even the good seed, sown on good soil, yielded here thirty-fold, there sixty-fold, and there a hundred-fold (Matt. xiii. 23). Whereby, as the saints explain, are denoted the three different degrees of those that serve God—beginners, proficient, and perfect. We all sow the same seed, because we all do the same actions and observe the same rule; all of us have the same hours for meditation and examens and from morning till night we are all occupied by obedience; yet, for all that, how one man excels another—*homo homini qui praestat!* What a difference, they say, between Peter and Peter, between one religious and another! The reason is that in one the works that he sows yield a hundred-fold, inasmuch as he does them with spirit and perfection, and these are the perfect; in another they yield increase, but not so much, only sixty-fold, and these are they who go on improving; in another they yield only thirty-fold, and these we are saying are beginners in God's service. Let everyone, therefore, see to which of these degrees he is arrived. See if you be not amongst those who yield only thirty-fold; and God grant that none of us find ourselves of the number of them of whom the Apostle St. Paul says that on the foundation of faith they have built wood and straw and chaff to burn in the day of the Lord (I Cor. iii. 12-13).

Take care, therefore, you do nothing out of ostentation, out of human respect, to please men, or to gain their esteem; for this were to make a building of wood, straw, and chaff, to burn at least in purgatory; but endeavor to do all your actions with the greatest perfection you are able, and that will be to *erect a structure all of silver, gold, and precious stones.*

The fact that herein lies our advancement and perfection will be well understood from this consideration. All our advancement and perfection consists in two things: in doing what God would have us do, and in doing it as He

would have us do it; nothing more can be asked, nothing more can be desired than this. As to the first, the doing of what God would have us do, by the mercy of God we have already secured that in religion; and this is one of the greatest advantages and greatest comforts that we enjoy; that we are sure that in the occupations given us by obedience we are doing what God would have us do. This stands for a first principle in religion, drawn from the Gospel and the doctrine of the saints. *He that heareth you, heareth me* (Luke x. 16). In obeying the superior, we obey God and do His will, for that is what God requires us to do there and then. There remains the second point, which is, doing things as God would have us do them; that is, with all possible perfection, because so God would have us do them. And that is what we are going to speak of. It is recounted in the Chronicles of the Cistercian Order, that St. Bernard, being with his religious at matins, saw a multitude of angels who noted and wrote down what the monks did and how they did it. They noted the doings of some in letters of gold, of others in silver, of others in ink, of others in water, according to the attention and fervor with which each one prayed and sang. But of some they wrote nothing at all, who, being present in body but absent in spirit, let themselves be carried away with vain and unprofitable thoughts. He saw also that chiefly at the *Te Deum* the angels were much concerned that it should be sung very devoutly, and that from the mouths of some, when they intoned it, there came out as it were a flame of fire. Therefore let everyone see what his prayer is like; whether it deserves to be written in gold, or in ink, or in water, or not to be written at all. See whether, when you are at prayer, there come forth from your heart and mouth flames of fire, or yawns and expressions of disgust. See whether you are there in body only, but in spirit at your studies or your office or business, or other things not to the point.

CHAPTER II

That It Ought Greatly to Animate Us to Perfection, That God Has Put It in Something That Is Very Easy

FATHER MASTER NADAL, a man distinguished in our Society for his learning and virtue, when he came to visit the provinces of Spain, made this one of the chief recommendations that he left behind him, that our advancement and perfection consisted in doing well the particular ordinary and daily things that we have in hand. Thus our progress and improvement does not lie in a multiplication of other extraordinary works, nor in filling high and exalted offices, but in doing perfectly the ordinary duties of religion and filling those offices in which obedience places us, though they be the meanest in the world, because that is what God requires of us. On this we should fix our eyes if we wish to please Him and attain perfection. Let us, then, consider at what a little cost we may be perfect, since we may be that by doing what we actually are doing without adding further works, which should be a great consolation for all and animate us much to perfection. If we demanded of you for your perfection exquisite and extraordinary things, elevations and lofty contemplations, you might excuse yourself, saying that you could not venture so high. If we demanded of you daily disciplines to blood, or fasting on bread and water, or going barefoot with a perpetual hairshirt, you might say that you did not feel strong enough for that; but that is not what we demand of you, nor in that does your perfection lie, but in doing the very thing that you are doing, taking care that it be well done. With the same works that you are doing, if you like, you can be perfect: the cost is already paid; you need not add more works. Who will not be animated hereby to be perfect, when perfection comes so ready to his hand and lies in a thing so familiar and so feasible?

God said to His people, to animate them to His service and the observance of His law: *The commandment that I give thee this day is not a thing very far and very exalted above thee, nor is it set there on the horn of the moon, that thou shouldst be able to say: which of us can mount up to heaven to reach it? Nor again is it a thing on the far side of the sea, that thou shouldst take occasion to say: who shall be able to cross the sea, and bring it hither from such a distance? No, it is very near and very ready to thy hand* (Deut. xxx. 11-14). We may say the same of the perfection of which we now speak. So with this consideration the blessed St. Anthony exhorted and animated his disciples to perfection. "The Greeks," he said, "to attain to philosophy and the other sciences, take great journeys and long voyages with great labor and risk to themselves; but we, to attain virtue and perfection, which is the true wisdom, have no need to put ourselves to such labors and perils, not even to stir out of our house, since within the house we shall find it, and even within ourselves. *The kingdom of God is within you* (Luke xvii. 21)"—*Graeci studia transmarina sectantur; regnum autem coelorum intra vos est*. In these ordinary and daily things that you do your perfection lies.

An ordinary question at spiritual conferences at a time of devotion, such as Lent, Advent, Whitsuntide, or renovation of vows, is what means will help us to dispose and prepare ourselves for this renovation, or this Lent, or to receive the Holy Ghost or the Child Jesus newly born. You will see given such and such means and such and such considerations, all good. But the principal means, and that on which we ought to insist, is that of which we speak now; namely, to perfect ourselves in our ordinary actions. Go to work ridding yourself of the faults and imperfections which you commit in these ordinary and daily things; contrive daily to do them better and with fewer faults, and that will be a very good, or rather the best, preparation for

all that you seek. Fix your eyes on this principally and let all other means and considerations go to help this.

CHAPTER III

In What the Goodness and Perfection of Our Actions Consists, and of Some Means to Do Them Well

LET us now see in what the goodness of our actions consists, to the end that thereby we may better come to know the means of doing them well. I say briefly that it consists in two things, of which the first and chiefest is that we act purely for God. St. Ambrose asks the reason why God in the creation of the world, after He had created the corporeal things and the animals, praised them at once. God created the plants and trees, and Scripture says at once that *He saw that it was good* (Gen. i. 10-25). He created the beasts upon the earth, the birds also and fishes; and He saw that it was good. He created the heavens and stars, the sun and moon; and He saw that it was good. He praised everything He created as soon as He had created it. But man He seems to leave alone without praise, because He added not presently: *He saw that it was good*, as He said of the rest. What mystery is this? And what can be the cause of this difference? The cause, says the saint, is this, that the beauty and goodness of beasts and corporeal things consists in their outward appearance and there is nothing perfect in them besides what at once strikes the eye, and therefore they may be praised as soon as they are seen. But the goodness and perfection of man consists, not in the exterior, but in what lies inwardly hid. *All the glory of the king's daughter is from within* (Psalm xliv. 14). It is this which is pleasing in God's sight. *For man seeth what outwardly appeareth, but the Lord seeth the heart* (I Kings xvi. 7). He sees with what intention everyone does each action, and it is upon this account that

He did not praise man, as He did all other creatures, as soon as He had created him. The intention is the foundation of the goodness of all our actions. Foundations are not seen, and yet they sustain the whole edifice. Our intention also does the same. The second thing required for the perfection of all our actions is that we do what we can on our part to do them well. It is not enough that your intention be good, nor to say that you do this for God, but you must contrive to do it in the best way you can, the better to please Him. Our blessed Father Ignatius once asked a brother who was somewhat negligent in his office: "Brother, for whom do you do that?" "For the love of God," answered the brother. Said our Father: "Then I assure you that if hereafter you do it in that way, I shall take care to give you a right down good penance; for if you did it for men, it were no great fault to do it with so little care; but doing it for so great a Lord, it is a great fault to do it in that style."

The second means which the saints set forth as very efficacious to this end is to walk in the presence of God. Seneca says that a man desirous of virtue and of doing things well should imagine that he is in presence of some personage for whom he has a great respect, and do and say all things as he would do and say them if he really were in that person's presence. *Sic vive tanquam sub alicuius boni viri ac semper praesentis oculis*. Now if this be sufficient for doing things well, how much more effectual will it be to walk in the presence of God and keep Him ever before our eyes, considering that He is looking at us—especially as this is no imagination, like the other, but a reality and fact, as Scripture so often repeats. *The eyes of God are clearer than the light of the sun: they see all the ways and steps of men, and the depths of the abyss, and the hearts of mortals and the most hidden things there* (Ecclus. xxiii. 28).

Hereafter we shall consider the presence of God in a treatise expressly dealing with the subject; for our present purpose it is enough to point out how important the exercise of the presence of God is for doing our ordinary actions well. If, indeed, through attention to the presence of God we were to be careless over our work and make mistakes in it, that would be no devotion, but an illusion. The exercise of the presence of God that the Scriptures and the saints recommend to us consists in doing our actions in such fashion that they may well appear before God and contain nothing unworthy of His sight and presence. St. John seems to remind us of this in the Apocalypse when, speaking of the four living creatures he saw before the throne of God, he says that *within and without, they were full of eyes* (Apoc. iv. 6): eyes in their feet, eyes in their hands, eyes in their ears, eyes in their lips, eyes in their very eyes; to signify that those who would perfectly serve God and be worthy of His presence, ought to be very circumspect to do nothing whereby they may render themselves unworthy to appear before Him.

You ought to be full of eyes within and without, so as to see how you work, and see how you walk, and see how you talk, and see how you hear, and see how you see, and see how you think, and see how you want, and see how you desire, that in all these things there may be nothing to offend the eyes of God, in whose sight you are.

Let the just, says the Royal Prophet, *eat and drink—there is no harm in that—and feast and rejoice in due season* (Psalm lxxvii. 4), but *before God*, so that all may appear before the eyes of God, and there be nothing in it unworthy of His presence.

Let us take notice that, instead of these words in Genesis: *Enoch walked with God, and was seen no more, because the Lord took him* (Gen. v. 24), Ecclesiasticus and St. Paul say: *Enoch pleased God, and was translated to paradise* (Ecclus. xlv. 16; Heb. xi. 5), giving us hereby to under-

stand that it is all one to walk with or before God, and to please God, because they explain the one by the other. Origen and St. Augustine give the same explanation to what is said in Exodus, where, when Jethro came to see his son-in-law Moses, Aaron and the chief of the people of Israel assembled to *eat bread with him before the Lord* (Exod. xviii. 12). The Scripture says not that they assembled to eat bread before the Tabernacle, or before the Ark, for they were not then in being; but they met together to rejoice and divert themselves with him by entertaining and feasting him, and kept the same moderation and decency during their mirth and feasting as they would have done had they eaten in God's presence, taking care that there should be nothing that might offend His sacred eyes. It is after this manner that the just and perfect walk before God in all things, even in the most indifferent actions necessary for the preservation of life.

In this way also many saints say that we accomplish what Christ our Redeemer says in His Gospel: *One must always pray and never desist* (Luke xviii. 1), and what St. Paul says to the Thessalonians: *Pray without ceasing* (I Thess. v. 17). They say that he prays always who is always doing good. So St. Augustine on the verse, *all day long thy praise* (Psalm xxxiv. 28), says: "Would you find a good means of being all day long praising God? Do well all that you do, and so you will be ever praising God." *Quidquid egeris bene age, et laudasti Deum.* The same says St. Hilary: "By this we succeed in praying without ceasing, when by means of actions pleasing to God and done always to His glory, all our life is converted into prayer. *Sancti cuiusque viri vita omnis oratio fit.* And in this way, living according to the law day and night, that very life will come to be a *meditation on the law day and night* (Psalm i. 2)." And St. Jerome on that verse: *Praise ye him, sun and moon, praise ye him all ye stars, and thou light, praise the Lord* (Psalm cxlviii. 3), asks how can sun and moon and light

and stars praise God, and answers: "Do you know how they praise Him? In that they never cease doing their duty well; they are always serving God and doing that whereunto they were created, and this is to be always praising God." Thus he who does his duty well, he who does very well the daily and ordinary things of religious life, such a one is always praising God and always in prayer. We may confirm this from what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Man: *He who observeth the law multiplieth prayer; it is a wholesome sacrifice to keep the commandments and stand aloof from all sin* (Ecclus. xxxv. 1). Hereby is well seen how much value and perfection attaches to doing the ordinary things that we do, taking care that they be well done; and how this is living ever in prayer and in the presence of God, and is a sacrifice very wholesome and very pleasing to God.

CHAPTER IV

Of Another Means to Do Our Actions Well, Which Is to Do Them as if We Had Nothing Else to Do

THE third means to do our actions well is to do each of them apart, as though we had nothing else to do; to make our meditation, to say mass, to recite our beads and divine office, and to do all the rest of our actions as if really we had no other business but just this that we are about. What gets in our way? Let us not mix up our works; let not one hinder the other; let us keep ourselves always to that which we are doing at present. While we are at prayer, let us not think of our studies nor of our office nor of business; all that serves only to hinder prayer, so that we do neither the one nor the other well. You have all the rest of the day left to study in, to do the duties of your office, to fulfil your ministry. *All things have their time* (Eccles. iii. 1); let us give to each thing its proper time: *Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof* (Matt. vi. 34).

This is a means so just and so conformable to reason that even the pagans, who had not the faith, taught it as the proper way to deal more reverently with those beings whom they took for gods. Hence sprang that old proverb, *Adoraturi sedeant*—"Let them who are to deal with God settle down to do it," in attention and repose, not cursorily and distractedly. Plutarch, speaking of the regard and reverence with which priests in his time approached their gods, says that, whilst the priest offered sacrifice, a herald ceased not to cry out and say in a loud voice: *Hoc age, quod agis*. "Do what you are doing, put your whole self into this business, do not turn aside, look well to the business on which you are engaged this hour." Think what you are about, stand to that, put all your care and energy into that which is now present, never mind for the time being the whole of the rest of things, and in that way you will do everything well.

A philosopher went about to prove that we should attend only to what we are doing at present and not to the past nor to the future, and he gave this reason: the present alone is that which is in our power and not the past nor the future, for what is already past is no longer in our power, and as for the future, we do not know whether it will come. Oh, if a man could succeed with himself and be so far master of his thoughts and imaginations as never to think of anything else but what he is at present doing! But such is the instability of our heart and on the other hand so great the malice and cunning of the devil that, availing himself thereof, he brings before us thoughts and solitudes of what we are to do next, to hinder and disturb us from doing what is before us at present. This is a very common temptation of the devil and a very harmful and ingenious one, his aim being therein that we should never do anything well. For this purpose, in meditation the devil brings in thoughts of business, study, the duties of your office, and represents to you how you might do this or do that well, to

the end that you may not make the meditation well, which is your present concern; and in return for that he does not hesitate to put before you a thousand ways and manners of doing that other thing well in the future, to the end that you may do nothing well now; and afterwards, when you come to the doing of it, he will not fail to find something else to put before you, that you may not do that well either. And in this way he goes on playing tricks upon us, that we may never do anything well. *But his intentions are not hidden to us* (II Cor. ii. 11); we understand them well. Leave alone what is to come and just at present take no care of it; for though that be a good suggestion for afterwards, it is not good to think of it now. And when there comes to you this temptation under pretense that afterwards you will not remember the suggestion that then occurred, by that very fact you will see that it is not God, but a temptation of the devil, because God is not a friend of confusion, but of peace and tranquility, order and agreement. Thus what disturbs your peace and tranquility and the order of things, is not from God, but from the devil, who loves confusion and perturbation. Let it alone and trust in God that, on your doing what you ought to do, He will suggest to you in due time all that will make to your purpose, and with advantages. And even though the reason and the good point, and the good argument and solution occur to you at the time of your spiritual duties, give it up and believe that you will lose nothing thereby, but rather gain. St. Bonaventure says that the science which is set aside for virtue's sake is found afterwards more amply by that same virtue. And Father Master Avila says: "When a care comes to you out of due time, say: 'My Lord gives me no orders about this just now, and I have no business to think about it. When my Lord shall command me, then I will deal with it.'"

CHAPTER V

Of Another Means, Which Is to Do Every Action as if It Were to Be the Last of Our Life

THE fourth means which the saints give for doing our actions well is to do every action as though it were to be the last of our life. St. Bernard says, directing a religious how to do his actions: "Let each one ask himself over every action: 'If you were to die at once, would you do this? Would you do it in this manner?'" And St. Basil says a thing, which another holy man also says, to put it in plain English, thus: "You should conduct yourself in every action as if you were to die at once. In the morning think that you will not live till night; and when the night comes, do not dare to promise yourself that you shall see the morning, for many die suddenly" (Å Kempis). This is a very efficacious means of doing everything well. And so we read of the blessed Abbot St. Anthony that he often gave this reminder to his disciples, to animate them to virtue and to doing things with perfection. Another author says: "Think that every day is your last"—*Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum*. If we did things each in turn, as if we were to die at once and as though this action were to be our last, we should do them in another manner and with other perfection. Oh, what a mass should I say, if I understood that that was to be the last action of my life, and that there was now no time left me to work or gain merit! Oh, what a meditation should I make, if I understood that that was my last, and that now I had no more time to beg God's mercy and pardon for my sins! Hence the proverb: "If you want to know how to pray, go to sea." Prayer is made in another manner with death before one's eyes.

They tell of a religious, a priest and servant of God, that he had the custom of going to confession every day to prepare for saying mass. At the end of his course he fell sick,

and the superior, seeing the sickness to be mortal, said to him: "Father, you are very ill; make your dying confession." The sick man answered, raising his hands to heaven: "Blessed and praised be the Lord, that now for thirty years and more I have made my confession every day as if I were to die at once; and so there will be no need now but to get ready for absolution as I would if I were about to say mass." That man went on well, and so we should go on. Every confession we should make as though it were our dying confession, and every communion as though it were our dying communion, and so do all our other actions; and thereby at the hour of our death it would not be necessary to tell us to confess so as to be ready to die, but only to dispose ourselves for absolution as though we were going to communion. If we lived always in this way, death would find us well prepared and never come upon us as a surprise. And this is the best prayer and the best devotion to guard against a sudden death. *Happy, says Christ our Redeemer, is that servant whom his master, at his coming, shall find thus watching* (Matt. xxiv. 46). And so lived holy Job: *All the days of this life, he says, I am looking for the other life* (Job xiv. 14). Every day I make account that this is the last for me. Call me, O Lord, on the day that Thou pleasest, since I am disposed and prepared to answer Thee and to meet Thy call at any time and hour that Thou wishest to call.

One of the best means to know whether we walk well and rightly before God is to consider whether we are in a state to answer Him at what time soever He calls and in what occupation soever we are engaged. I speak not here of an infallible certainty, for such is not to be had in this life without a particular revelation; but I speak only of probable and moral conjectures, which is all we can pretend unto. A great and main means to attain is to see whether in the condition and present conjuncture you are in and in the very action you are about, you would not take it ill that

death should come upon you. Think whether you are as ready to answer to God as Job was in case He should call you at this moment. Try yourself often in this manner and ask yourself many times this question: "If death were to come upon you now, would you have reason to be glad?" When, reflecting and examining myself, I find that I should be glad if death were to come upon me at this instant and in the very action I am doing, I fancy I am going on well and feel some satisfaction. But when I find that I should not like death to come just at present and catch me in this office, occupation, and conjuncture, but had rather he would wait a bit until the schemes I have on hand which distract my thoughts were brought to an issue, that is not a good sign, but rather I take it for a clear indication that I am neglecting my spiritual welfare and not living as a religious should do. For as that holy man says: "If you had a good conscience, you would not much fear death;" and if you do fear it so much, it is a sign that you have some remorse of conscience and your accounts are not in good order. Better fear sin than death. The steward whose accounts are in good order desires that they should come and take them; but he who has them in bad order is afraid of their coming and sets up all the excuses and delays in his power.

Father Francis Borgia used to say that a good exercise for a religious was four and twenty times a day to put himself in the condition of a dying man; and he added that a man might then think of himself in a good state when, often repeating these words: "I must die today," he found nothing that troubled him. Let everyone, then, enter into an account with himself and examine himself many times on this point. And if it appears that you are not today in a state and condition to die, take care to put yourself in good condition for this final crisis. Reckon that you beg of the Lord to grant you a few days of life for this purpose and that He does grant them, and profit by the time and endeavor to live as if you were presently to die. Blessed is

he who lives in the disposition that he desires to be found in at the hour of death. This is one of the most profitable things that we can preach to our neighbor, that they should live in such a disposition as they desire to be found in at the hour of death and not put off their conversion and repentance to the future; for tomorrow is uncertain and who knows if you shall have tomorrow? "God, who has promised pardon to the sinner if he repents," says St. Gregory, "has never promised him that he shall have tomorrow"—*Qui poenitentibus veniam spopondit, crastinum diem non promisit*. It is a common saying that nothing is more certain than death, nor more uncertain than the hour of death.

But Christ our Redeemer says yet more. *Be ye ready*, says He, *because the son of man will come at the hour ye think not* (Luke xii. 40). For though He speaks in this place of the general Day of Judgment, yet this may be understood also of the hour of death because then each one shall receive his particular judgment and such a sentence as, being once pronounced, will never be revoked, but confirmed at that great and general day. Christ does not content Himself with saying the hour is uncertain and that you know not when it will come, but He says it will come just when you least expect it and perhaps when you are least of all prepared for it. St. Paul tells the Thessalonians that *the Lord will come like a thief in the night* (I Thess. v. 2); and St. John in the Apocalypse, speaking in God's name, says: *I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I mean to come* (Apoc. iii. 3). A thief gives no notice, but waits for the hour when all are least upon their guard and even asleep. And along with this same comparison Christ our Redeemer teaches us how we should behave, to the end that death may not catch us on a sudden and off our guard. *Know ye that if the father of the family knew at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and would not suffer his house to be*

broken open (Luke xii. 39). If he knew the hour, it would be sufficient to be awake just then; but because he cannot foresee the hour, or whether it will be in the beginning, towards the middle, or at the end of the night, he continually stands upon his guard to save himself from being robbed. Thus you must ever be watchful, for death will come at the hour you think not.

It is a very great mercy of God that the hour of death should be uncertain, to the end that we may always be prepared for it; for if we knew the time, this assurance would give us occasion to become more lax and sin with greater confidence. If, uncertain as we are of the hour of death, we live, notwithstanding, with so great negligence, what should we do if we were assured we should not die for some time! *Fool*, says the Son of God to the rich, covetous man, *this night they are requiring thy soul of thee, and what will become of those riches thou hast gathered together?* (Luke xii. 20).

Now what we preach to others, we should take also to ourselves, as the Apostle warns us: *What thou teachest to others, thou dost not teach thyself* (Rom. ii. 21). One of the temptations the devil most commonly makes use of to deceive men is to hide as much as he can from them so clear a truth as this; to divert their eyes and their thoughts from it and make them believe that there's time enough for this world and the next, and that one day they will grow better and live after another manner than they do now. It is not only worldlings he abuses after this manner, but he also deceives many religious after the same fashion, persuading them to defer their spiritual advancement from one day to another, till they have done their studies, till they are out of this office and got this business off their hands: then I will get to rights my spiritual duties and my penances and mortifications. Unhappy you, if you die in your studies! What will then the learning serve you for which you have relaxed your efforts after virtue, but as *straw and*

wood, for you to burn the more thereon in the next life! (I Cor. iii. 12). Let us, then, profit ourselves by what we say to others. *Physician, cure thyself* (Luke iv. 23). Apply this remedy to yourself, since you have need of it.

CHAPTER VI

Of Another Means of Doing Our Actions Well, Which Is to Take No Account of Anything beyond Today

THE fifth means that will greatly aid and animate us to do ordinary things well and to perfection is to take no account of anything farther than the present day. And though at first sight this means seems not at all different from the last, yet it really does differ, as we shall see in the sequel. One of the things which is wont to discourage and enfeeble many in the way of virtue, one of the temptations which the devil puts into their heads, consists of such reflections as these: "Can you manage to go on for so many years in such recollection, such punctuality, such exactness, mortifying yourself continually, denying your appetite, and setting aside your own will in all things?" The devil represents this as very difficult, and that it is not a life that can be carried on for such a long time. We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that, when he retired to Manresa to do penance, amongst other temptations wherewith the devil assailed him this was one: "Can you suffer a life so austere as this for the seventy years of life that still remain to you?" Against this temptation this means is directed. There is no question of many years, nor of many days, but only of today. It is a means very proportionable to our weakness. For one day, who will not animate and force himself to live well and do all that in him lies that his actions may be well done? This is the means that our Father sets before us in the particular examen, where he bids us make our resolution from half-day to half-day.

"From now till dinner-time at least I propose to be modest in my gait, to keep silence, and practise patience." In this way that becomes easy which possibly might be too hard, if you took it absolutely: "I propose never to talk, and always to go about with restraint on myself in great composure and recollection."

This was that means the monk made use of, of whom we read in the lives of the Fathers, that, being so much tempted to gluttony that even at break of day he found himself ready to faint for hunger, yet he resolved not to break the holy custom of his order in eating before three in the afternoon; and to this end made use of this artifice. In the morning, talking to himself, he said: "Hungry as thou art, is it much to wait till nine o'clock? Then thou mayest eat." At nine o'clock, "Verily," said he, "I ought in something to do violence to myself, and not eat till noon. As I have been able to wait till nine o'clock, so shall I be able till twelve;" and so he entertained himself that time. At twelve he put his bread in water and said: "While the bread soaks, I must wait till three o'clock as I have waited till this hour; and I will not for a gain of two or three hours break the monastic custom." Three o'clock came and he ate, after saying his prayers. This he did for many days, beguiling himself with these short terms, till one day, sitting down to eat at three o'clock, he saw a smoke rise out of the basket where he kept his bread and go out by the window of his cell, which must have been the wicked spirit that tempted him. From this time forth he never felt those false fits of hunger and faintness that he used to have; on the contrary, he had no trouble in passing two days without eating. Thus our Lord rewarded the victory he had gained over his enemy and the conflict that he had endured.

But it is not without reason we said that this means was very proportionable to our weakness, for after all it treats us as men are wont to treat infirm and feeble folk, helping

us on little by little, that the work may not frighten us. But if we were strong and fervent and had much love for God, it would not be necessary to help us on in this way, so little by little, to hide from us the labor and difficulty; since the true servant of God does not put before him the length of time or the number of years, but all time seems short to serve God and all labor little, and so it is not necessary to help him on in this way, little by little. St. Bernard says this well. "The truly just man is not like the hireling or day laborer, who binds himself to serve for one day or one month or for one year, but forever without limit and without term he offers himself to serve God with hearty good will. *For ever and aye I will never forget, O Lord, thy law and thy commandments and counsels* (Psalm cxviii. 93). And because he offers himself and determines to serve God absolutely and without limit and does not fix a term, saying: "For a year, or for three years, I will do this," therefore his reward and recompense shall also be without limit for ever and aye"—*Non enim ad annum vel ad tempus instar mercenarii, sed in aeternum divino se mancipat famulatuui. Non igitur ad tempus; proinde iustitia eius manet non aliquanto tempore, sed in saeculum saeculi. Sempiterna igitur iusti esuries sempiternam meretur refectionem.* In this way St. Bernard explains the saying of the Wise Man: *Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time* (Wisdom iv. 13). The true just man in a short time and in a few days of life lives many years, because he loves God so much and has such a desire to serve Him that, if he lived a hundred years or even a thousand, he would be ever busy-ing himself in serving Him more and more. And for this desire and determination it is as though he did live all that time in this manner, because God will reward him according to his desire and determination. These are men indeed, lusty, strong men, like Jacob, who for the great love that he bore Rachel thought it a little thing to serve for seven years and then for seven years more. *All this time seemed to him short for the great love he bore her* (Gen. xxix. 20).

CHAPTER VII

Of Another Means to Do Our Actions Well, Which Is to Get into a Way of So Doing Them

THAT fine old philosopher Pythagoras gave very good advice to his friends and disciples, how to be virtuous and make to themselves the practice of virtue easy and sweet. Let everyone, said he, choose a good course of life, and in the beginning not mind its seeming hard or painful, for custom will afterwards render it quite easy and agreeable. Behold here a very important means whereby to help ourselves, not so much because it comes from that philosopher, but because the Holy Ghost Himself suggests the same, as we shall see afterwards, and because it is most proper to attain our end. We have already chosen an excellent way of living, or, to say better, the Lord has chosen one for us, *because it is not you that have made choice of me, but it is I that have made choice of you* (John xv. 16); blessed and glorified be He forever for that. Notwithstanding, there may be a more or a less in this state of life in which God has put us; for, according to the works that you do therein, you may become either a good or a tepid religious. If, then, you desire to advance and gain perfection therein, accustom yourself to do all your duties well and perfectly; accustom yourself to make your meditation well and your other spiritual duties; accustom yourself to be very exact in obedience and the observance of rules and to make account of little things; accustom yourself to recollection, to mortification and penance, to modesty and silence; and do not leave off because at the beginning you find some difficulty therein, for afterwards by custom it will become to you very sweet and pleasant and you will never feel that you can sufficiently render thanks to God for having accustomed you thereto.

The Holy Ghost teaches us this doctrine in many passages of Holy Scripture. In Proverbs (iv. 11) He says: *I*

will show thee the way of wisdom—I will teach thee to find a sweet savor in the knowledge of God, because this is the meaning of wisdom (*sapientia*) in Holy Scripture, says St. Bernard. Wisdom is savory (*sapida sapientia*): wisdom is a sweet and savory knowledge of God. I will teach thee, then, he says, the way whereby thou mayest come to find savor and a sweet taste in the knowledge, love, and service of God. *I must take thee by the narrow paths of virtue*—he calls them *narrow* because at the beginning they are made difficult to us by our evil inclination and we think it a narrow path—but *after thou hast passed these narrow entrances, thou shalt find the way very wide, roomy, and to thy liking, and thou shalt run without tripping up or being brought to a standstill anywhere* (Prov. iv. 12). The Holy Ghost teaches us gracefully by this metaphor that, though at the beginning we find difficulty in this way of virtue and perfection, we must not be alarmed at that, for afterwards we shall not only find no difficulty, but much relish, content, and mirth, and shall come to say: *I have labored a little, and have found much rest to myself* (Ecclus. li. 35). The same is repeated in Ecclus. vi. 20: *Thou shalt labor a little and presently shalt eat and enjoy the fruit of thy labor*. The Apostle St. Paul also teaches us the same: *Every training and every good exercise in the beginning appeareth difficult and painful and sad; but afterwards, as one groweth used to it, it not only becometh easy, but very pleasant and enjoyable* (Heb. xii. 11). Thus we see in all the arts and sciences. How difficult is study when one first enters upon it! How often is it necessary for one to be brought to it by force! Hence they say: "Letters draw blood at first entrance." But afterwards by practice, as one improves and learns, one develops such a taste as to find all one's entertainment and recreation in study. So it is in the way of virtue and perfection. St. Bernard declares this very well on those words of Job: *The things that formerly my soul could not bear to touch, now of necessity have become*

my food (Job vi. 7). "How great is the effect of exercise and custom and what power it has! In the beginning you think a thing very difficult and insupportable; but if you accustom yourself to it, it will not appear so difficult nor so burdensome as that. A little after you will think it light and easy and feel it almost as nothing; a little after that you will not feel it at all; and in a short time you will not only not feel it, but it will give you so much delight and contentment that you will be able to say with Job (vi. 7) as above"—*Primum tibi importabile videbitur aliquid; processu temporis, si assuescas, iudicabis non adeo grave; paulo post et leve senties; paulo post nec senties; paulo post etiam delectabit.*

Thus it all goes according to the way in which one has got accustomed to act. The additions and instructions for meditation and examen are difficult for you to observe because you are little accustomed to do so. You find such difficulty in fixing your imagination, so that it may travel where you wish immediately upon awaking and in times of meditation; that is because you never have done violence to it, nor accustomed it to being brought to order and restrained, and not go thinking of anything but the matter of meditation. The reason why silence and recollection makes you silent and melancholy is because you practise it little. *Cella continuata dulcescit, et male custodita taedium generat*—"A quiet corner is sweet when you stay there, and wearisome when you keep it badly" (A Kempis). Worldly people find prayer and fasting difficult because they are not accustomed to it.

King Saul clad David in his armor, seeing that he was to fight with the Philistine; and, as he was not used to bear such arms, he could not walk under their weight; he afterwards got used to armor and fought good battles in it. And what I say of virtue and goodness, I likewise say of vice and evil. If you allow a bad habit to arise, the evil thing will grow and gather strength and afterwards it will be

very difficult to cure it, and so you will remain with it all your life. Oh, if from the beginning you had accustomed yourself to do things and do them well, how well off would you find yourself now, seeing virtue and goodness having become so sweet and easy to you! See how satisfied he is who has a habit of not blaspheming, and with what ease and comfort he avoids so many mortal sins. Begin, then, to form a good habit from this hour, for better late than never. Take to heart the doing well of these ordinary actions that you do, since that goes for so much in you; and apply thereto the particular examen, one of the best examens you can make, and in this manner it will become to you sweet and easy to do them well.

CHAPTER VIII

Of How Great Importance It Is for a Religious Not to Slow Down in the Way of Virtue

BY all that we have said it is easy to comprehend of how great consequence it is for a religious to keep up his devotion and always to go on with fervor in the exercises of religion and never let himself fall into tepidity and weakness, for afterwards it will be very hard for him to get out of it. God certainly can make you return afterwards to a life of fervor and perfection, but it will be a miracle and a prodigy. St. Bernard perfectly well treats this point, writing to Richard, Abbot of Fountains, and his religious, in whom God had wrought this wonder, that, whereas hitherto they had led a tepid and loose kind of life, God had now changed and brought them to great fervor and perfection; whereat the saint marvels much and sends his congratulations: "The finger of God is here. Who will grant me to come over and see this marvel? For a marvel it is, no less than that which Moses (Exod. iii. 2) beheld of the bush that burned and was not consumed. It is a most rare and very extraordinary thing for anyone to advance and raise

himself afterwards beyond the level to which he has once settled down in religion. It will be easier to find many seculars converted from a bad to a good life than to meet even one religious passing from a tepid and lax life to a fervent and perfect one." *Rarissima avis in terra est qui de gradu quem forte in religione semel attigerit vel parum ascendat.* And the reason of this is that persons in the world have not the remedies that their souls need so constantly at hand as religious have; and so, when they hear a good sermon or see a neighbor and friend carried off by a sudden and unhappy death, the novelty of the thing causes in them alarm and astonishment and moves them to amend and change their lives. But the religious who has these remedies so constantly at hand, such frequentation of sacraments, so many spiritual exhortations, such exercise in meditating the things of God and dealing with death, judgment, hell, and heaven, and for all that is tepid and slack—what hope can there be of his changing his life? His ears are inured to it, and so these considerations cannot aid or move him; and what moves others does not move him nor make any impression on him.

This is also the reason of that celebrated pronouncement of St. Augustine: "Since I have begun to serve God, as I have not known any better men than those who had done well in religion, so I have not known worse than those who have fallen from it"—*Ex quo Deo servire coepi, quomodo difficile sum expertus meliores quam qui in monasterio profecerunt, ita non sum expertus peiores quam qui in monasteriis ceciderunt.* St. Bernard says that very few of those who have fallen and failed in religion return to the state and degree that they held before, but rather go on getting worse. Over such, he says, the Prophet Jeremy weeps: *How has the purest gold lost its luster, how has that color so brilliant faded, how has that former beauty changed? They who were reared in purple and laid on costly couches, they who were regaled with divine delights in prayer, and*

all their discourse and conversation was in heaven, *have come to embrace dung* and revel in mud and filth (Lam. iv. 1-5).

Thus, ordinarily speaking, there is little hope of those who begin to go backward and take a turn for the worse in religion—a thing that ought to strike great fear into us. And the reason is that which we have mentioned, since they fall sick under the very medicines and remedies under which they ought to improve and get well. But if that which improves and cures others only makes them sick and worse than they were, what hope can there be of doing them any good? When you find a sick man on whom medicines have no effect, but rather he feels worse for them, you may well take him for one undone. That is why we take so much account of sin and a fall in religious and fear it so much, while we do not give so much thought to it in people of the world. When a physician sees a fainting-fit or a great feebleness of pulse in a sickly and weak subject, he is not much concerned; but when he sees it in a robust and very healthy man, he takes it for a very bad symptom, because such a mischance cannot happen in that case without the predominance of some malignant humor, prognosticating death or serious illness. So it is here: if a secular falls into sins, they are not mischances very inconsistent with the careless life of one who goes to confession once or twice a year and lives in midst of so many occasions of sin; but in a religious, sustained by such frequentation of sacraments, so much prayer, so many pious exercises, when he comes to fall, it is a symptom of a great decay of virtue and a deep-seated infirmity, and there is reason to fear.

But I do not say this, says St. Bernard, to drive you into discouragement, especially if you seek to rise immediately; for the more you put it off, the harder it will become. *I say this that ye may not sin, nor fall nor grow weak, but if anyone hath fallen, we have a good advocate in Jesus Christ* (I John ii. 1), Who can do what we cannot do. Therefore

let none be discouraged, since if he heartily returns to God, without doubt he will obtain mercy. If the Apostle St. Peter, having attended the school of Christ for so long a time, and been so much favored by Him, fell so grievously, and after so grievous a fall as that of having denied his Master and Lord returned to so lofty and eminent estate, who will be discouraged? "You have sinned in the world," says St. Bernard; "was it more than St. Paul? You have sinned here in religion; was it more than St. Peter?" But they, since they repented and did penance, not only gained pardon, but very high sanctity and perfection. Do you the like, and you will be able to return not only to your former state, but to much greater perfection.

CHAPTER IX

How Important It Is for Novices to Make Progress during the Time of Their Novitiate, and Accustom Themselves to Do the Exercises of Religion Well

THIS instruction for novices may also serve all those who are entering on the way of virtue. The first rule of the master of novices in our Society says the thing well in a few words, which are addressed not to us only, but to all religious. "Let the master of novices understand well that he has given over to his charge a thing of the highest importance." And the rule gives two very solid reasons to make the master of novices open his eyes and understand the weightiness and importance of his charge. The first is that on this first training and formation of the novices there usually depends all their future progress. The second is that all the hope of the Society pivots on this, and on this depends the well-being of the order. Coming down to explain these things more in particular, I say first that on this first training given and the attitude taken up by each novice in his novitiate, depends all growth or decay

for the time to come. Commonly speaking, as we said in the last chapter, if in the time of his novitiate an individual is tepid and careless of his spiritual progress, tepid and careless he will remain. It is not to be supposed that afterwards he will act with greater care and fervor; there is no reason to believe that he will effect this change and improvement afterwards, but very much reason to believe that he will not.

To make this better appear, let us address our discourse to the novice himself, weighing the reasons and convincing him therewith. Now you are in your noviceship, you have a great deal of time to apply to your spiritual advancement and different means that may contribute thereto, your superiors thinking of nothing else but this and making it their chief endeavor. Now you have many examples before your eyes of others who are bent on no other purpose than this. It is a thing that animates and encourages one much, to live with companions who have in view this object alone and nothing else; and the sight of others going ahead obliges one, however heavy and lumpish he be, to get out of his sloth. Now you have a heart disengaged and free and seemingly desirous of virtue, with nothing to withdraw you from it, but much to aid you. But if now that you are here for this purpose alone, and have nothing else to think of, you do not improve nor gain any virtue, how will it be when your heart is taken up and divided in a thousand different ways? If now with so much freedom from business, such advantages and aids at hand, so much leisure, such conveniences, and so many helps, you make not your meditation and examen well, nor take pains to observe your additions and do your other spiritual duties properly, what will become of you when the care of your studies shall take up your thoughts, and, in later life, business, confessions, and sermons? If with so many conferences, so many exhortations, so many examples, and so many solicitations, you do not profit, what will become of you when you shall meet

with impediments and obstacles on all sides? If in the beginning of your conversion, when novelty should increase your fervor and zeal, you are, notwithstanding, slack and listless, what will become of you when your ears shall be inured and hardened to all things that may touch or do you any good? And further, if now while passion is but beginning to stir and the evil inclination is not strong, being only at its commencements, still you have not the courage to resist it, how will you resist and overcome it afterwards, when it shall have taken deep root and gathered strength by habit, so that it will be like a very death struggle for you to change it?

St. Dorotheus illustrated this very well by an example which he recounts of one of the Fathers of the Desert, who, being one day in a place full of cypresses of all sorts, great and small and of medium size, bade one of his disciples pluck up a little one he pointed at, which his disciple presently did without any difficulty. Then he pointed to another, somewhat bigger, which he in like manner plucked up by the roots, but with greater difficulty than the former, being forced to take both hands to it. To pluck up another, which was yet stronger, he had to call in the help of one of his companions. And, lastly, all of them together labored in vain to pull up another which was much bigger still. "Behold," said the ancient Father, "how it is with our passions. In the beginning, when they are not yet rooted, it is easy to master them if you take but ever so little pains. But afterwards, when by long habit they have taken deeper root, it will be very hard; much force will have to be used, and I do not know if you will succeed."

By what I have said, we may perceive that it is a very grave abuse and a very dangerous temptation to defer from day to day our amendment, thinking we shall be better able to mortify and overcome ourselves another time, because at present we have not the courage to do it by reason of the great difficulty. If, whilst this difficulty is yet

small, you cannot bring yourself to surmount it, what will you be able to do when it shall become greater? And if at present, whilst your passion is but like a lion's whelp, you have not the courage to attack it, how will you be able to do it when it shall be grown a great and furious beast? Hold it, therefore, for a certain truth that if now you are tepid and remiss, tepid and remiss you will be in the time to come. If you now are not a good novice and a good apprentice, you will never hereafter be a good senior nor a good workman. If at present you are neglectful of obedience and the observance of rules, you will be more so afterwards. If now you are careless over your spiritual duties and botch them, a botcher you will remain all your life. The whole point lies in the established attitude which you take up now. They say that the business of kneading dough lies in the first putting in of the yeast.

St. Bonaventure says: In the attitude which one takes up at the beginning, in that he remains. It is very difficult for an old man to bend himself to that to which he was not accustomed in his youth. It is a proverb of the Holy Ghost: *A proverb it is, says Solomon: train the youth to go his way, and when he is old he will not depart from it* (Prov. xxii. 6). Hence St. John Climacus came to say that it is a very dangerous thing and matter of much apprehension, when one enters on his course with tepidity and faint-heartedness, because, he says, it is a clear indication of a fall to come. For this reason it is of supreme importance to accustom oneself to virtue from the outset and do one's spiritual duties well. The Holy Ghost warns us of this by the Prophet Jeremy: *It is a good thing for a man to accustom himself to bear the yoke from his youth* (Lam. iii. 27), because he will hold to it afterwards, and thereby render to himself the way of virtue and goodness easy; otherwise he will find it very difficult. *What thou hast not gathered in the time of youth, how thinkest thou that thou shalt find it afterwards in the time of old age?* (Ecclus. xxv. 5).

From this first reason follows the second, because if all the progress of a religious in future depends on his first formation, then all the good of the order depends likewise thereon; for an order does not consist of the walls of its houses and churches, but of the assembly of the religious, and they who are in the noviceship are they who have to be afterwards the whole order. For this reason the Society was not satisfied with establishing seminaries and colleges where Ours are reared in letters and virtue together, but established seminaries of virtue alone, where attention is paid to abnegation and mortification of self and to the practice of true and solid virtues, as being more of a main foundation than letters. For this the houses of probation exist, being, as our Father Francis Borgia says, for the novices a Bethlehem, that is to say, "the House of Bread," because there are made the biscuit and provisions for the voyage, against the great risks that await us. This is harvest time, this the season of abundance; these are the years of fertility, in which your business is to take in supplies, as Joseph did, against coming years of hunger and sterility. Oh, if the people of Egypt had understood, and cast up their account, and carefully considered what they were doing, they would not have been in such a hurry to empty their houses of the wheat which Joseph was gathering and locking up in his barns! Oh, if you would take account how important it is for you to come out well provisioned from the house of probation! In that case, certainly, you would not be eager to get out of it quickly, considering how ill you are off for virtue and mortification. And therefore Father Francis Borgia says that such as aim or are glad at shortly going out of the novitiate show signs of want of judgment and lack of understanding of their need of good preparation; they make light of the day's work that is before them, since they so lightly take the risk of rushing into it unprovided.

Oh, how rich and laden with virtues does our Father take us to be, when we are to leave the house of probation! He appoints two years of probation and experiment, wishing the novice during that time to think of nothing else but his spiritual advancement, seeing no other books and studying nothing else but what may forward him in self-denial and growth in virtue and perfection. He is supposed to go out at the end of that time so spiritual and fervent, such a lover of mortification and recollection, so devoted to prayer and spiritual exercises as to need even to be restrained therein. He therefore advises such persons, when they go to the colleges, to abate somewhat of their fits of fervor during the time of their studies; not to make such long prayers nor do so many mortifications. Our Father supposes one to leave the noviceship with so much light, so much knowledge of God and contempt of the world, so fervent and devout and inwardly lifted up to spiritual things as to need these cautions. Do you, then, endeavor to go out such. Make the most of this time, so precious that perchance never in your life will you have such a time again for gathering spiritual riches. *Let not so good time pass in vain, nor lose any part of it* (Ecclus. xiv. 16).

One of the great favors that the Lord does to those whom He draws to religion in their tender age, and for which they owe Him infinite thanks, is that it is then very easy for them to apply themselves to virtue and religious discipline. A tree, while it is tender at the beginning, may be easily shaped so as to grow into a very beautiful tree. But afterwards, when you have let it grow in its own way and become crooked and awkwardly spreading, you will break sooner than guide it into the shape you want; and such it will remain as long as there is life left in it. So it is easy to shape and direct one of tender age and turn him to what is good; and by accustoming him to it from the time that he is small, it will be rendered very easy for him afterwards and so he will go on and ever persevere in it. It

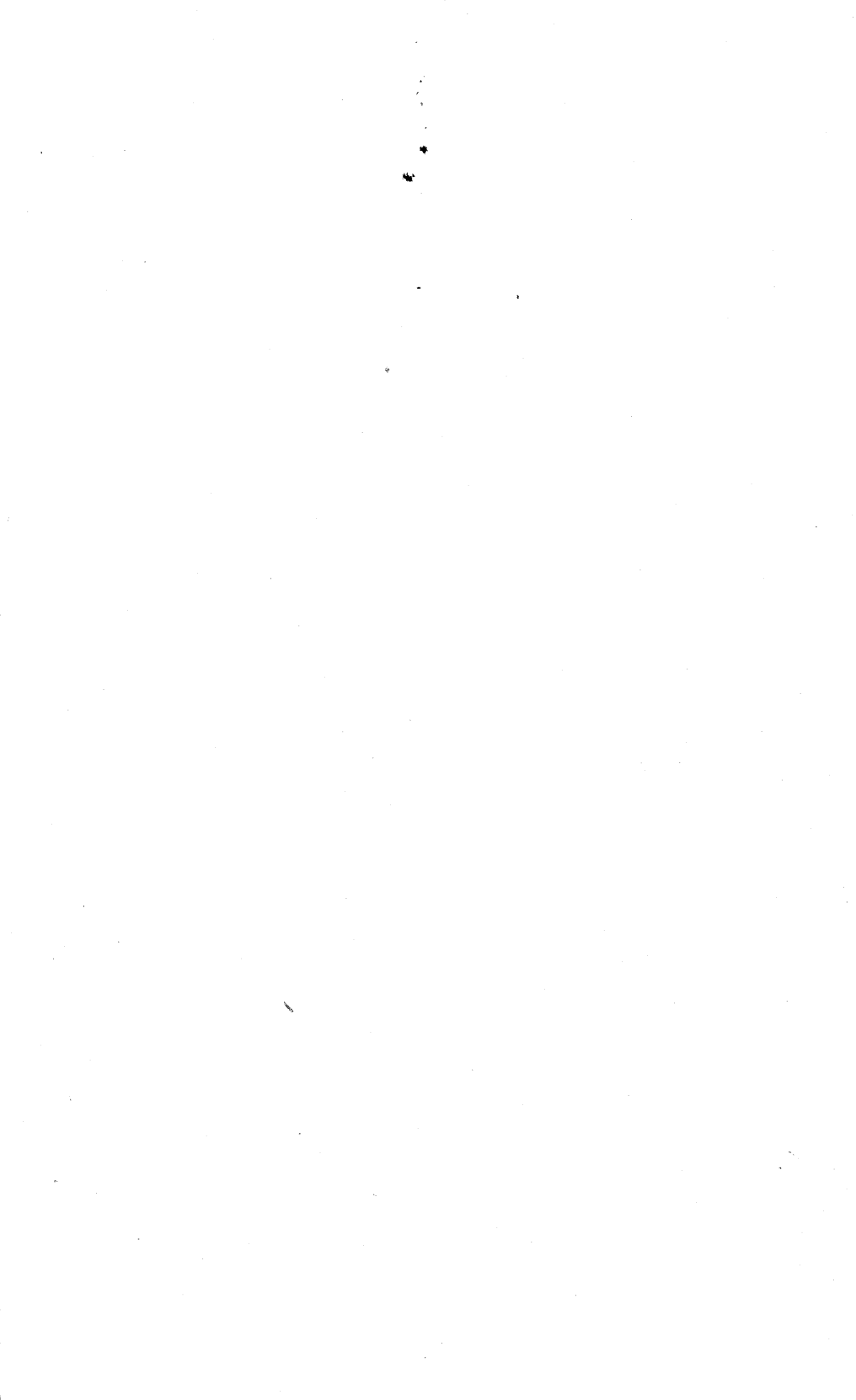
is a great thing for stuff to be dyed in the wool, because then it never loses its color. Who can restore to its whiteness, says St. Jerome, the wool that has drunk in a purple dye? And another says: "An earthen jar long retains the odor of the first liquor poured into it." The Scripture praises King Josias for that, *when yet a boy, he began to seek the God of his father David* (II Chron. xxxiv. 4).

Humbertus, a person of note and Master General of the Order Preachers, relates that a certain religious after his death appeared some nights to another religious, his companion, all in glory; and, leading him out of his cell, he showed him a great number of men, clad in white and encompassed with light, who carried very fair crosses upon their shoulders as they went in procession towards heaven. A little after, he beheld another procession, fairer and more resplendent than the former, each member of which carried a far richer and a more beautiful cross in his hands, and not on his shoulders as the former did. After that, a third procession passed, still more glorious and admirable than the two former, for all their crosses were of a surprising beauty, and they carried them neither on their shoulders nor in their hands, but an angel going before, each carried his cross for him, so that they followed with much alacrity and joy. The religious, astonished at this vision, asked an explanation. His companion answered that the first, who carried their crosses upon their shoulders, were those who had entered religion at a mature age; the second, who held their crosses in their hand, were those that entered in early youth; and the last, who marched with so much freedom and cheerfulness, were those who when they were small children had renounced the world and embraced a religious life.

THIRD TREATISE

ON PURITY OF INTENTION





CHAPTER I

That in Our Actions We Ought to Shun the Vice of Vainglory

ONE of the things most recommended and repeated in our Constitutions and Rules is to keep a right intention in all our actions, seeking in them ever the will of God and His greater glory. At every step our Rules repeat to us these words: "To the greater glory of God," or "Looking ever to the greater service of God," which is the same thing. Our blessed Father had so engraven on his heart this desire of the greater glory and honor of God and was so used to the practice of doing all things for this end, that from thence he came to bring it out and utter it so frequently. *From the abundance of the heart the words come forth* (Luke vi. 45). This was ever, as it were, his coat of arms and the soul and life of all his actions. With much reason do they put on his pictures this lettering, A.M.D.G., *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—"To the greater glory of God." These are his arms, this his motto and coat; this is the summary of his life and exploits. Such also ought to be our arms, our motto and coat, that as good children we may resemble our Father.

With reason does he inculcate this so forcibly upon us, since all our progress and perfection turn on the actions which we do; and the better these are and the more perfect, the better and more perfect shall we ourselves be. But our actions will be more fraught with goodness and perfection in proportion as our intention is more right and pure and our end and aim higher and more perfect, for this it is that gives life and being to our works, according to the text of the holy Gospel: *The light of thy body is thine eye: if thine eye be pure and simple, all thy body will be bright and light-some; but if it be evil and double-minded, all thy body will*

be dark and in the shade (Matt. vi. 22). By the *eye* the saints understand the intention, which sees and first forestalls what it seeks; and by the *body* they understand the action, which follows the intention as the whole body follows the eyes. Christ our Redeemer, then, says that what gives light and brightness to our actions is the intention and so, if the end and intention of the action is good, the action will be good, and if evil, evil; and if the end be high and perfect, the action will be so likewise.

It is this also which the Apostle St. Paul says: *If the root be holy, so too are the branches* (Rom. xi. 16). As is the root, so will be the tree and the fruit thereof. Of a tree the root of which is injured, what can be expected but unpleasant and sour and worm-eaten fruit? But if the root is healthy and good, the tree will be good and bear good fruit. So in actions the goodness and perfection thereof lies in the intention, which is the root. And to the same account it is said that the purer they are, the better and more perfect they will be. St. Gregory on that text of Job, *Whereon are its supports firmly fixed?* (Job xxxviii. 6), says that, whereas the whole structure of a material building rests on certain pillars and the pillars on their bases and pedestals, so the whole spiritual life rests on the virtues, and the virtues are founded on the right and pure intention of the heart.

But to proceed with this subject in an orderly manner, we will speak first of the evil end which we have to shun in our actions, not doing them for vainglory or for other human considerations, and then we will speak of the right and pure intention which we ought to have, because the first thing to do must be to withdraw from evil, and after that to do good, according to those words of the prophet: *Depart from evil, and do good* (Psalm xxxiii. 15).

All the saints admonish us to be much on our guard against vainglory, because, say they, it is a cunning thief which often steals from us even our best actions, and which

insinuates itself so secretly that it has even robbed and despoiled us before we perceive it. St. Gregory says that vainglory is like a robber in disguise, who insinuates himself into the company of a traveler, pretending to go the same way that he goes, and afterwards robs and murders him when he is least upon his guard and thinks himself in perfect security. "I confess," says the saint in the last chapter of his "Moralia," "that when I go about to examine my own intention in writing these books, methinks my sole aim is to please God therein; but, notwithstanding, when I am off my guard, I find that some desire of satisfying and pleasing men intermixes itself, and some vain self-complacency. I know not how nor in what manner, but at the end of a little while I come to see that this business goes not in its later course so free from dust and chaff as it was when I began. I know I began with a good intention and desire simply of pleasing God, but since then I see it is not so pure as that. The same thing happens here as in eating; we begin to eat of necessity, and gluttonous delight steals over us so subtly that what we began of necessity to sustain nature and preserve life, we continue and conclude for the mere pleasure of the palate." Thus here in religion we often take up the duty of preaching and the like for the advancement and profit of souls; and then vanity gains an entrance and we desire to please and satisfy men and to be taken notice of and esteemed; and when things fall out otherwise, our wings evidently droop, and we do the work with a bad grace.

CHAPTER II

In What the Malice of Vainglory Consists

THE malice of this vice consists in this, that the vainglorious man endeavors to walk off with the glory and honor that belong to God alone, according to the words of St. Paul: *To God alone be honor and glory* (I Tim. i. 17);

which He has no mind to give to another, but reserves to Himself. *I will not give any glory to another* (Isaias xlii. 18). So St. Augustine says: "Lord, he who would be praised for Thy gifts and seeks not Thy glory but his own in the good he does, is a robber; he is like the devil himself, who endeavored to rob Thee of Thy glory."

In all the works of God there are two things; the profit of the work, and the honor and glory thence resulting, which consists in the doer's of the work being praised, esteemed, and honored for it. Now God has ordained in this life, and wishes it to be so carried out, that all the profit of His works should go to man, but all the glory should be for God Himself. *God hath wrought all things for himself* (Prov. xvi. 4) *for his praise and glory and honor* (Deut. xxvi. 19). And all things preach to us His wisdom, goodness, and providence; and therefore it is said that the heavens and earth are full of His glory (Psalm xviii. 1: Isaias vi. 3). Thus, when in your good actions you seek the glory and honor of men for yourself, you pervert the order which God has established in good works and do an injury to God, seeking and endeavoring that men, who should ever be occupied in honoring and praising God, should be taken up with praising and esteeming you—seeking that the hearts of men, which God has made as vessels to be full of His own honor and glory, should be full of your honor and glory and high renown, which is tantamount to stealing away those hearts from God and, as it were, casting God out of His own house and home. What greater evil can there be than to steal away God's honor and glory and the hearts of men? With your mouth you bid them look to God, but at heart you wish them to turn their eyes away from God and fix them on you. The truly humble man has no wish to live in the heart of any creature, but in that of God alone; he would not have one take thought of him, but of God alone, nor busy himself about

him, but about God, and that Him alone all men should entertain and keep in their heart.

The malice of this sin may be further gathered from this example and comparison. A married woman would clearly be doing her husband wrong, if she were to dress and adorn herself to please any other man but him. Good works being the apparel wherewith we adorn and array our soul, we do God great wrong if we put them on to please anyone but God, Who is the spouse of our soul.

Or again, see what a foul shame it would be for a knight to plume himself much on the score of some slight labor undertaken for the love and service of his prince, when that prince had first exposed himself to great affronts and labors on behalf of that same knight. What bad form it would be for that knight to boast and brag of some petty service, a mere nothing, that he had rendered his master! What a sorry figure he would cut before all the company! And what if the prince had done and undergone all that hard work without any help from the knight, while the knight was indebted to the prince's aid and countenance for the little that he had done, for which, moreover, he had been promised and had received high reward! All this we may apply each one of us to himself, to make us ashamed of having a high conceit of ourselves for anything we have done for God, still more of boasting of it, since in comparison with what God has done for us and what we ought to do for Him, it is miserably little.

The malice of this sin further appears in this, that theologians and saints reckon it among the seven vices commonly called *deadly*, or more properly *capital*, because they are the heads and principles of the rest. Some enumerate eight *capital vices*, and say that the first is pride and the second vainglory; but the common opinion of the saints, and that received in the Church, puts seven capital vices; and St. Thomas says that the first of these is vainglory,

and that pride is the root of them all, according to the Wise Man: *The beginning of all sin is pride* (Eccles. x. 13).

CHAPTER III

Of the Loss That Vainglory Entails

CHRIST OUR LORD clearly warns us in these words of the Gospel: *Take care not to do your good works before men, or to be seen and praised by them; otherwise ye shall have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.* Be not as those hypocritical Pharisees, who do all their works to be seen by men and honored and esteemed by them. *In truth I tell you, these have already received their reward* (Matt. vi. 1-2). You had a desire to be regarded and esteemed; that moved you to do what you did, but that also shall be your reward and crown; expect none other in the next life. Unhappy you, you have already received your wages and have nothing further to hope for! *The hope of the hypocrite shall perish*, says holy Job (viii. 13), the hypocrite being he who does things to be regarded and praised. St. Gregory shows this very well; human esteem and praises were what the man desired, and it shall end with his life. *The fool shall find no pleasure in his folly* (Job viii. 14). Oh, what a mockery and deceit shall you find when your eyes are opened and you see that with that wherewith you might have gained the kingdom of heaven, you have gained only a vain applause of men, a "Well said," or a "Well done." He who seeks the esteem and praises of men in payment of his virtuous acts, offers for sale at a low price a thing of high value; for that whereby he might have merited the kingdom of heaven, he seeks an idle praise. What greater delusion and what greater folly can there be than this, to have worked hard, done many good works, and find yourself afterwards left with nothing! This is what the Propheth Aggeus says: *Advert and see what ye are*

doing in this matter. Ye have sown much, and have reaped little; ye have eaten, and not been filled; ye have drunk and not quenched your thirst; ye have clothed yourselves, and not got warm; all that ye do hath profited you nothing, because ye put it into a sack full of holes, so that ye have scarce put it in on one side than it goes out on the other (Agg. i. 5-6). Another text says: *He who gathereth riches is as one who pours wine into a cask or barrel full of chinks and holes, so that to pour it in and pour it out is one and the same thing. This is the doing of vainglory: to gain and to lose is one and the same thing; the loss is conjoined with the gain. Why do ye give your silver for what is not bread, and spend your labor on what cannot satisfy your hunger?* (Isaias lv. 2). Now that you do things, now that you labor and weary yourself, do the things in such a way that you may get some return from them and not lose them entirely.

St. Basil gathers three losses that this vice of vainglory entails upon us. The first is that it makes us weary and afflicts our body with labor and good works. The second, that it robs us of these good works after they are done, making us lose all the reward and recompense of them. It does not keep us from learning, says St. Basil—that were no such great loss, to rob us of a reward we had not worked for; but it takes care to make us weary ourselves in doing good works and then robs and despoils us of them, depriving us of the reward. It is, he says, like a pirate that lurks in ambush, watching for a ship to come out of harbor well-laden with merchandise, and then delivers his attack. It is not the way of pirates to chase a vessel when she comes out of harbor empty to go for a cargo of merchandise. They wait till she returns with her cargo; so this robber, called vainglory, waits till we are laden with good works and then assaults and despoils us of them.

Further, it not only deprives us of the reward, but makes us deserve chastisement and torment instead thereof; it

converts good into evil and virtue into vice by the vain and evil end that it sets before us. And thus of good seed there is reaped an evil crop and pain and chastisement is merited by that whereby we might have merited heaven. And all this vainglory does so sweetly and pleasantly that the man not only does not feel his loss—as he does lose all that he does—but actually enjoys it, so much so that, however much you tell him and he sees himself that he is losing all, nevertheless he seems bewitched by this desire of being praised and esteemed, inasmuch as it quite carries him away. Therefore St. Basil calls vainglory “a gentle despoiler of our spiritual gifts and a pleasant enemy of our souls”—*dulcem spiritualium exspoliatricem, incundum animarum nostrarum hostem*. It is a very endearing enemy; it is a pleasant impoverisher. Thus it is, says the saint, that this vice infatuates so many by the sweetness and pleasantness that it carries with it. This human praise, he says, is a thing very sweet and delicious to simpletons, and thereby it infatuates them. *Dulce quid humana imperitis gloria est*. And St. Bernard says: “Fear this arrow of vainglory; it enters pleasantly and seems a light thing, but I tell you of a truth it inflicts no slight wound on the heart”—*Time sagittam; leviter volat leviter penetrat; sed dico tibi non leve infligit vulnus; cito interficit*. Like corrosive sublimate, it is a small powder, but deadly poison.

Surius relates how, when the great Pacomius was sitting in a certain place of the monastery with other grave Fathers, one of his monks brought out two little mats that he had made that day and put them hard by his cell, in front of where St. Pacomius was, that he might see them, thinking that he must surely praise him for being so industrious and careful, inasmuch as, while the rule only ordered him to make one mat a day, he had made two. The saint, understanding that he had done this out of vanity, heaving a great sigh, said to the Fathers who were with him: “See how this brother has worked from morning to night, and

all his labor he has offered to the devil, and has loved rather the esteem of men than the glory of God." He called the monk and gave him a good scolding and enjoined him for penance that, when the monks should assemble for prayer, he should go there with his mats at his sides and say in a loud voice: "Fathers and brothers, for the love of the Lord do you all pray for this wretched sinner, that He may have mercy on him for having set more store by these two little mats than by the kingdom of heaven." And he further enjoined that, when the monks were at dinner, he should stand in like manner in the middle of the refectory with his mats at his sides all the time that the meal lasted. And his penance did not stop there; after that was done, the abbot ordered that they should shut him up in a cell, and nobody was to visit him, but he was to be there alone for the space of five months, and they were to give him nothing to eat but bread, salt, and water, and every day he was to make two mats, unseen and fasting. Hence we may learn for our instruction what severe penances those ancient Fathers gave for slight faults, and the humility and patience wherewith their subjects took them and profited thereby.

CHAPTER IV

*That the Temptation to Vainglory Assails Not Only
Beginners, but Also Those Who Are Well-Advanced
in Virtue*

ST. CYPRIAN, speaking of the second temptation with which the devil assailed Christ our Lord, when he took Him to the pinnacle of the Temple and said to Him: *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down* (Matt. iv. 6), exclaims: "O execrable malice of the devil! The malignant fiend thought to overcome by vainglory Him Whom he had not conquered by gluttony!" He wanted Him to fly through

the air, to be a spectacle of admiration to all the people. He thought to succeed with Him as he had with others. He knew by experience and had proved it many times, that he had overcome by the temptation of vainglory and pride those whom he had not been able to overcome by other temptations, vainglory being a harder thing to overcome than gluttony. It is hard not to take delight in hearing oneself praised. As there are few who like to hear themselves ill-spoken of, so there are very few who do not take satisfaction in others' thinking and speaking well of them. Hence we see that this temptation of vainglory touches not beginners and novices alone, but even the most ancient in religion, men well versed in perfection; indeed, it is more properly their temptation.

The holy Abbot Nilus, who was a disciple of St. John Chrysostom, relates of those old and experienced Fathers that they brought up and instructed novices differently from seniors. On novices they enjoined great attention to temperance and abstinence, because they said that he who lets himself be carried away and overcome by the vice of gluttony will easily be vanquished by the vice of lust; for how shall he resist the greater enemy, who does not know how to stand out against the less? But the seniors they advised to be very watchful to defend and guard themselves against vainglory and pride, as seamen have to take precaution against sunken rocks at the mouth of the harbor. It often happens that after a prosperous voyage vessels come to shipwreck in the harbor; so many who have voyaged well through the whole course of their life, overcoming and mastering all the temptations they met with, at the end, when nearing the harbor, confident in their past victories and taking themselves to be secure, have waxed proud and careless and so come to a miserable fall; and the vessel that had not sprung a leak nor in any way behaved ill on so long a voyage over the open sea, has come to mishap and shipwreck in port. That is the doing of vainglory,

and so the saints call it a storm in harbor; others compare it to one who goes on board a ship, well-provisioned and laden with merchandise, and scuttles and sinks it.

Therefore those ancient Fathers did not instruct beginners and novices to be on their guard against vainglory, for they thought it was not necessary. Just come in from the world, running with blood and with the wounds of their former sins still unclosed, beginners carry with them matter enow of humility and confusion; to these their instructors preached abstinence, penance, and mortification. It was the seniors who had deeply bewailed and lamented their sins and done much penance for them, and had had long exercise in the practice of virtue, that needed these warnings against vainglory. But as for beginners, who were void of virtue and full of passions and evil inclinations, and who had not yet done with duly lamenting their sins and their past forgetfulness of God, these gave no ground for attacks of vainglory, but much for sorrow and shame. That treatment was quite right. Hence they may gather occasion of great confusion who, having many things to humble themselves for, yet for one point in which they shine and think they do very well, vaunt themselves and give themselves airs. Here we are much mistaken; one single defect ought to be enough to confound and humble us, but with us it is the other way about—all the many faults and defects we have are not enough to humble us, but one good point that we fancy we find in ourselves is enough to make us proud, and desire to be honored and esteemed on the strength of that. Herein well appears the malice and subtlety of vainglory, since it lets nobody off, but assails people who present no grounds for it. As St. Bernard says: "It is the first sin we fall into, and the last we overcome." Therefore, brethren, says St. Augustine, let us all arm ourselves and forestall the attacks of this vice, as did the Prophet David, saying: *Turn away my eyes that they behold not vanity* (Psalm cxviii. 37).

CHAPTER V

*Of the Special Need That There Is to Beware of the Vice
of Vainglory in Those Who Have the Office of
Helping Their Neighbor*

ALTHOUGH, as we have said, all need to be watchful against this temptation of vainglory, yet we whose office it is by our institute to help to the salvation of souls, need more particularly to be forearmed against it. For our ministries are very exalted and open and manifest to the whole world; and the greater and more spiritual they are, so much greater on the one hand is our danger, and the greater our offense on the other, if we seek ourselves therein and want to be regarded and esteemed by men. This would be exalting ourselves with that which God most prizes and esteems; namely, His graces and spiritual gifts. So St. Bernard says: "Woe be to them to whom it has been given to conceive and speak well of God and spiritual things and understand the Scriptures and preach eloquently, if that gift which has been given them to gain souls and extend and spread the honor and glory of God, they turn to the purpose of seeking themselves and being regarded and esteemed by men! Let them fear and tremble at what God says by the Prophet Osee: *I have trusted them with my riches; I have given them my silver and gold and the precious jewels that I most valued, and they have made of them an idol of Baal* (Osee ii. 8)." They have fabricated with it an idol of honor. *Vae qui bene de Deo et sentire et loqui acceperunt, si quaestum aestiment pietatem, si convertant ad inanem gloriam quod ad lucra Dei acceperunt erogandum, si alta sapientes humilibus non consentiant.* St. Gregory applies to this purpose what St. Paul says to the Corinthians: *Let us not be as many who adulterate the word of God* (II Cor. ii. 17). He gives two

explanations of this passage. The first is when one understands and explains Holy Scripture in another manner than what it really means, engendering and extracting therefrom by one's own spirit false and adulterous senses, the lawful husband and author thereof being the Holy Ghost, and the true and lawful sense that which He has declared to His Church through her saints and doctors. The second explanation of adulterating the word of God is what makes to our purpose. There is this difference between the true and lawful husband and the adulterer, that the former intends to beget and have children, while the latter intends only his own lust and satisfaction. In the same way he who by the word of God and the office of preaching which he holds does not intend so much to beget spiritual children to God—which is the end for which preaching is ordained, according to the saying of St. Paul, *I have begotten you by the Gospel* (I Cor. iv. 15)—as his own gratification and satisfaction, seeking to be regarded and esteemed, such a one adulterates the word of God. And therefore also the saints call vainglory a spiritual lust because of the great delight that is taken in it, as greater than the other carnal delight and lust as the soul is greater than the body. Let us not, then, adulterate the word of God; let us not in our ministries aim at anything else than the honor and glory of His Divine Majesty, according to what Christ our Redeemer says: *I seek not my own glory, but the honor and glory of my heavenly Father* (John viii. 56).

Holy Scripture relates an action of Joab, Captain General of the Army of David, an action worthy of being recounted and imitated by us. It says that Joab with his army was besieging the city of Rabath, the capital city of the Ammonites, where their king resided with his court. When he was pushing the siege with advantage and was on the point of entering and taking the city, he dispatched couriers to King David letting him know how the matter stood, that he might come and enter and take it. And he

gives this reason: *That the honor of the victory may not be attributed to me, if I enter and take it* (II Kings xii. 28); and so it was done. This is the loyalty that we should observe with God in all our ministries, never seeking to have the fruit and conversion of souls or the good success of enterprises attributed to us, but all to God. *Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory* (Psalm cxiii. 1). All the glory should be given to God Who is in heaven, as the angels sang: *Glory be to God on high* (Luke ii. 14).

Of St. Thomas of Aquin we read in his Life that never in his career had he any vainglory amounting to a fault. He never took any complacency or satisfaction in the great learning and angelic understanding and other gifts and graces that God gave him. And of our blessed Father Ignatius we read that for many years before he died he never had so much as a temptation to vainglory; so illuminated was his soul by light from heaven and so great his knowledge and contempt of himself, that he used to say there was no vice that he feared less than vainglory. There is the model that we should imitate; we should blush and be ashamed when we allow vanity to arise in us even in mean things. How would you be if you saw yourself a great doctor and preacher, gaining great fruit of souls and highly valued by princes and prelates and all the world? We need to accustom ourselves in small things to make no account of the praises and esteem of men, nor regard human considerations, that so we may be competent to do the same in great things.

CHAPTER VI

Of Sundry Remedies Against Vainglory

ST. BERNARD in his fourteenth sermon on the psalm *Qui habitat*, on that verse, *Thou shalt walk upon serpents and basilisks, and trample underfoot lions and dragons*, declares at length how some of these animals do hurt with

their teeth, biting; others with their breath; others with their claws; others terrify by their roaring; and so the devil invisibly does hurt and makes mischief for men in all these ways; and he applies the properties of these animals to various temptations and vices whereby the devil makes war on us. Coming to the basilisk, he says: "Of the basilisk there is told a portentous thing, that by even his look he infects men so grievously as to kill them." And the saint applies this to the vice of vainglory, according to those words of Christ: *Take heed that ye do not your good works before men to be seen by them* (Matt. vi. 1), as though He would say: "Take heed of the eyes of the basilisk." So the saint says that there is this about the vice of vainglory, that it kills only the blind and the careless, who display themselves and put themselves forward for the vice to see them and do not take care themselves to look at it first, considering what a vain and useless thing this vainglory is; for if in this way you first catch sight of the basilisk of vainglory, it will not kill you nor do you any harm—rather you will kill it, undoing it and turning it all to smoke.

Let this be the first remedy against vainglory, to try to get the first look at this basilisk by setting ourselves to consider and examine attentively how the opinion and esteem of men is all a puff of wind and vanity, giving us nothing and depriving us of nothing, so that we shall be neither better for men's praising us and setting store by us, nor worse for their disparaging us and persecuting us. St. Chrysostom, commenting on the verse of the Fifth Psalm, *For thou wilt bless the just*, treats this subject well. He says that these words are used by the prophet to animate the just man who is persecuted and hears hard words said of him by men, not to be alarmed at that or make much account of it. What harm will the contempt of all mankind do him, if the Lord of angels blesses and praises him? On the contrary, if the Lord does not bless and praise him,

nothing will avail him aught, not though all the world praises and publishes his merits. He quotes the example of holy Job, who, sitting upon a dunghill, covered all over with leprosy, ulcers, and worms; persecuted and scoffed at by his friends, by his own wife, and by the whole world, yet was, notwithstanding, more blessed than them all because, while men loaded him with insult and spoke ill of him, God spoke well of him, saying that he was *a man simple, upright, fearing God, and keeping aloof from evil, and persevering in innocence* (Job ii. 3). Here was a man truly great, and the unfavorable judgments of men and the poor opinion that the world entertained of him lost him nothing. St. Chrysostom further says that all our care and diligence should be to be regarded and esteemed before God, because to be so before men takes nothing away from us and brings us nothing in and there is no reason why we should take account of it. The Apostle St. Paul said: *I care nothing for being judged and made light of by men; I have no mind to satisfy men; it is God that I seek to satisfy, since He is my judge: He that judgeth me is the Lord* (I Cor. iv. 3). St. Bonaventure adds another point. "Be not angry," says he, "with those that speak ill of you, for what they say is either true or false; if it be true, you must not wonder they dare say what you durst do; if it be false, their detraction can do you no harm." But if, notwithstanding, some stirrings of sensitiveness should arise, suffer, he says, all with patience, as one suffers a cautery if fire is applied to a wound; for as the cautery cures the wound, so the detraction that you suffer will perhaps cure you of some secret pride lurking in your heart.

The second means that will help us very much for the obtaining of this end, is that which St. Basil, St. Gregory, St. Bernard, and generally all the saints recommend to us; which is to take very great care to let no expressions slip out of our mouths that may turn to our own praise. "Never say anything of yourself that may redound to your

praise," says St. Bernard, "though the person you speak to should be one of your most familiar friends; but, on the contrary, endeavor to hide your virtues with more care than you take to hide your vices." Father Master Avila used so great a circumspection in this matter that, when it seemed necessary for the instruction of his neighbor to say something of edification that had happened to himself, he recounted it as of a third person, so that the other might not understand that he was the man. Concerning our Father Ignatius, we were told by a prelate of Spain who had known him at Paris that, when he was treating of prayer and persuading others to it, some asked him how he himself got on in prayer, to which he answered: "I shall only tell you what it befits you to know; that is charity and necessity, the other is vanity." We read in like manner of St. Francis that he was so reserved in this matter, that he not only never discovered to others the favors and particular graces God had communicated to him in prayer, but, when he went from it, he endeavored so to compose himself in his words and comportment that none should be able to perceive what he had in his heart.

In the third place, not content with never saying a word that might redound to our own praise, we should go further and do all we can to keep secret the good works that we do, as we are told in the Gospel: *When thou prayest, enter into thy private room and shut the door and there pray to thy heavenly Father in secret. And when thou givest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth* (Matt. vi. 6), as though to say: "Don't let even yourself know." *And when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou mayest not appear to men to be fasting* (Matt. vi. 17). Show then more cheerfulness than usual; make a feast of it, because in that province of Palestine, St. Jerome says, they used to anoint their heads on feast days.

Great is the subtlety of this vice, and therefore the Redeemer of the world recommends us so strongly to be on our guard and hide away from it, doing our works in secret, that we may not lose them nor be robbed by this thief. This is the precaution taken by travelers, says St. Gregory, to conceal the money they carry with them; for if they showed and made a display of it, the thief would catch sight of it and rob them. He cites to this effect what befell King Ezechias, who showed the treasures of his house to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon, and the Babylonians afterwards made booty of them and carried them off to Babylon. They also bring into this effect the comparison of the hen, who cackles when she lays an egg and thereupon loses it.

The true servant of God, says St. Gregory, is so far from this that he is never satisfied with stopping short at any good deed that may possibly come to be known, thinking that he has been already rewarded for that, but endeavors to heap up thereupon other good deeds that cannot possibly be known of men. St. Jerome tells of St. Hilarion that, perceiving the concourse of people that followed him and the reputation that his miracles had occasioned, he was much afflicted and wept every day very bitterly; and his disciples asking him what was the occasion of his sadness and tears: "Methinks," said he, "seeing the esteem that men have of me, that God is paying me in this life for the service which I endeavor to render Him." This is another consideration and another very good means to aid us against this vice. Be on your guard and do not aspire after the praises of men, for fear lest God should pay you therewith for any good that you may happen to have done in this life. For so He is wont to do, as He Himself tells us in saying to the rich glutton: *Remember, son, that thou hast received thy good things in this life* (Luke xvi. 25). It is also for the same reason that the saints do counsel us to avoid all sorts of singularity in devotion, because what

is unusual most attracts notice, and it is a common saying that he who does what no one else does draws the eyes of all the world upon him. These things are wont to foster in your soul vainglory and pride, whence arises contempt for others.

But because we cannot always hide our good works, especially when we are called upon to contribute by our example to the edification of our neighbor, let this stand for the fifth remedy, to take care to rectify our intention, raising our heart to God and offering Him all our thoughts, words, and actions, to the end that, when vainglory comes to claim a part in them, we may say to it according to the advice of Father Master Avila: "You come too late; all is already given to God." It will also be very good to make use of the answer St. Bernard made to a thought of vainglory that came to his mind while he was preaching: "I did not begin for you, and I won't leave off for you." For we ought not to let the fear of vainglory make us desist from our good undertakings; we must only stop our ears and thereby render ourselves deaf to the praises of men. St. Chrysostom says we ought to behave to the world as a father behaves towards his son while he is yet in his infancy, for whether the child fondle his father or show himself peevish to him, it is all the same thing to the father; he laughs as well at the one as at the other because he looks upon him as a baby, who knows not what he says nor what he does. Let us look upon the world in the same manner and take it for a baby, not having sense to know what it is saying. Father Francis Xavier, Apostle of the East Indies, used to say that whoever would enter into himself and consider what he really is before God, would think that men were making game of him when they praised him and would take their praises for real insults.

Let us conclude hereupon, and make our final remedy against vainglory, self-knowledge, which is directly opposed to it. If we would plunge and sink deep into this, we should

quite understand that we have no ground for any approach to vainglory, but much for self-abasement and humiliation; and this, not only looking at our evil deeds and sins, but even looking at the works which seem to us very good and righteous: on examination we should find therein abundant matter for humiliation and shame. St. Gregory often repeats: "All human righteousness, that which we commonly hold and have on our part, is convicted of being unrighteousness if it is judged strictly; kind indulgence apart, our work, from which we look for reward, is often worthy of punishment." And so holy Job said: *I feared for all my works* (Job ix. 28), because of the defects and faults that are usually mingled with them when one does not walk cautiously keeping guard over oneself. When vainglory approaches, let us attentively examine and take account at night what the day has been like; we shall find in ourselves a depth of miseries, evils, and faults that we have fallen into in thought, work and word, and omission; and if in aught by favor of our Lord there has been any good done, we shall commonly find that we have failed by pride and vainglory or by laziness and negligence, and by many other faults that we know, and by many others that we do not know, but may well believe that they are there. Let us, then, enter into ourselves, let us take refuge in knowledge of ourselves; let us look at our feet, that is, at the foulness of our works, and that will at once put a spoke in the wheel of vanity and pride rising in our heart.

CHAPTER VII

Of the End and Good Intention That We Ought to Have in Our Actions

WE have considered how vanity and regard for the opinion of men are to be avoided in the actions that we do if we would keep aloof from evil. Now we will consider the end and intention that we ought to have in them, which

is the greater honor and glory of God. The blessed St. Ambrose applies to this purpose what naturalists tell of the eagle, that the test that he uses to know his young, whether they be legitimate or spurious, is to take them in his talons and expose them hanging in mid-air to the rays of the sun; and if they look fixedly at it without winking, he takes them for his own and returns them to the nest and rears them; but if he sees that they cannot look fixedly at the sun, he takes them for no offspring of his and lets them fall to the ground. Now in this it shall be known if we are true sons of God, if we look fixedly at the true Sun of Justice, that is, God; directing to Him all that we do, so that the end and aim of all our actions is to please and satisfy God and do in them His most holy will. This agrees well with what Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel: *Whoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and my sister and my mother* (Matt. xii. 50).

We read of one of those ancient Fathers that at every action which he wished to set about he paused a little while; and when asked what he was doing, he answered: "Look you, our actions of themselves are worth nothing if we do them not with a good end and intention; and as the marksman, to hit the mark, stops, pausing a little while, looking and taking aim, so I, before I do any good work, ordain and direct my intention to God, Who ought to be the end and aim of all our actions; and that is what I am doing at the time of my pause." Now that is what we ought to do. *Put me as a seal on thy heart* (Cant. viii. 6). And as the marksman, better to make sure of his mark, shuts his left eye and looks only with his right, that his sight may be more collected and not distracted nor end by looking in many directions, so we ought to shut the left eye of human and earthly considerations and open only the right by a good and right intention, and in this manner we shall hit the mark and come home thereby to the heart

of God. *Thou has wounded my heart, my sister, my spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of thine eyes* (Cant. iv. 6).

To speak more clearly and descend more to particulars in this matter, I say that we should endeavor to refer and direct all our actions to God. And in this there is greater and less. In the first place, at rising we should offer to God all the thoughts, words, and actions of that day and beg Him that all may be for His glory and honor, so that afterwards, when vainglory comes, we may answer with truth: "You come too late; that is already given away." And further, we should not be satisfied with offering and referring actually to God, when we rise, all that we are to do that day, but we should try to accustom ourselves as far as we can never to start anything that is not actually referred to the glory of God. And as the stonecutter or mason at work upon a building is wont to hold the plummet or rule in his hand and to apply it to every stone or brick that he lays, so we ought to regulate and direct every action that we do by this rule of the will and greater glory of God. And further, as the workman is not content with applying the rule or plummet once at the beginning, but applies it again and again until the stone is well and completely laid, so we must not be content with referring to God once for all at the beginning the actions which we do, but also during the time of doing them we should do them in such manner as to be always offering them to God, saying: "Lord, it is for Thee that I do this, because Thou commandest it, because Thou wilt it."

CHAPTER VIII

In Which It Is Explained How We May Do Our Actions with Great Rectitude and Purity of Intention

TO explain how we may do our actions with greater perfection and purity, the masters of spiritual life bring a good comparison. As mathematicians abstract from the matter, and deal only with the quantities and figures, of bodies, making no account of the matter in which they are, be it gold or silver or any other substance, since that is no concern of theirs, so the servant of God in the actions that he does must fix his eyes chiefly on doing the will of God, abstracting from all matter, not looking to see whether it is gold or clay, not minding whether they put him in this office or that, since our progress and perfection lie not therein, but in doing the will of God and seeking His glory in what we do. The glorious St. Basil says this very well, and it is founded on the doctrine of the Apostle St. Paul. All the life and actions of a Christian man have one end and aim, which is the glory of God, for *whether you eat or drink or do any other thing, says the Apostle, you should do all to the glory of God* (I Cor. x. 31).

The Apostle St. John relates how Christ our Redeemer was talking with the Samaritan woman, being very tired and weary with His journey, and the disciples had gone into the town to look for something to eat, as the hour was late. When they came with the food, they said to Him: *Master, eat. But he answered them: I have meat to eat ye know not of. And when they asked one another: Hath any man brought him something to eat? My meat, he answered, is to do the will of him that sent me* (John iv. 32). See here what ought to be our meat in all things we do. When you study, when you hear confessions, when you lecture or preach, your meat must not be the satisfaction of knowing or studying or preaching, since that would be to make clay of gold, but all your meat and nourishment and satis-

faction should be the fact of your doing the will of God, which requires you there and then to be doing those things. And the same also should be your meat when you serve in the domestic offices of the house. Thus one and the same is the meat, and one and the same the diet, of porter and infirmarian as of preacher and lecturer. So you should be as content in your office as he is in his, since you have the same ground of contentment that he has, which is doing the will of God. Thus we should ever aim at having in our mouth and in our heart these words: "For Thee, O Lord, I do this, for Thy glory, because so Thou willest;" and we must not stop in this exercise until we come to do things *as serving the Lord and not men* (Eph. vi. 7), as St. Paul says, and until we do them in such a way as to be always in them actually loving God, and rejoicing in them inasmuch as therein we are doing the will of God, so that when we are at work it seems that we are rather loving than working.

Father Master Avila makes here a good and very homely comparison. When a mother is washing the feet of her son or husband who has come off the road, she is at once serving and loving and rejoicing, and taking particular pleasure and satisfaction in the comfort she is giving. Oh, if we could succeed in doing our actions in this manner! Oh, if we could hit on this treasure hidden in the field, a treasure so manifest and open in one way and yet so hidden and concealed in another, what spiritual and interior and advanced men should we be! This is true alchemy, most certain to make out of copper and iron the finest gold; for though the work be in itself very humble, hereby it is made very exalted and of immense value. Let us, then, from now onwards aim at turning whatever we do into the finest gold, since the thing can be done so easily. In the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon, everything was either of gold or covered with gold (III Kings vi. 19-22); so everything in us should be love of God or done for love of God.

CHAPTER IX

That the Reason Why We Find Ourselves Sometimes Distracted and Thrown Back in Our Spirituality by Exterior Occupations Is Because We Do Them Not as We Should

FROM what has been said it will be understood that the reason why we find ourselves at times distracted and spiritually enfeebled by exterior occupations does not lie in the occupations, but in our own selves, inasmuch as we know not how to profit by them and do them as we ought. And so let no one throw the blame on his occupations, but on himself, in that he does not know how to profit by them. Crack the nut; since it is not what is on the outside that is eaten, but what is in the inside. If you stop on the exterior of the work and this outer shell, that will harass and break your body and dry up your spirit. The inside, the kernel, which is the will of God, ought to be your food. So crack with the teeth of consideration this shell, and leave this bark outside and pass on to the marrow, like Ezechial's great eagle (Ezech. xvii. 3), that made its way inside and drew out the marrow of the cedar, not stopping at the bark. *I will offer thee holocausts of marrow* (Psalm lxxv. 15). That it is on which we ought to rest, and offer it to God, and in this manner your soul will thrive and grow.

Martha and Mary are sisters; they do not disturb nor hinder one another, but aid one another. Prayer helps to do action well, and action, done as it ought to be done, helps prayer, like good sisters. If you feel yourself troubled and disturbed in action, it is because Mary, that is, prayer, does not help you. *Martha, Martha, thou art solicitous, and troubled over many things* (Luke x. 41). Martha is troubled because her sister Mary does not help her. *Tell her, Lord, to help me* (Luke x. 40). Endeavor to procure the aid of Mary, that is, of prayer, and you will see how the

trouble will cease. Ezechiel (viii. 1) says of those holy living creatures that each held its hand under its wing, to give us to understand that spiritual men keep the hand of action under the wing of contemplation without removing the one from the other, since in action they contemplate and in contemplation they act. Cassian also says of those monks of Egypt that while working with their hands they ceased not on that account to contemplate God, doing with their hands the office of Martha and with their heart that of Mary.

St. Bernard puts this very well. "Those engaged in spiritual life and prayer take much care so to occupy themselves in exterior works and occupations that the spirit is not stifled nor devotion quenched. Thus exterior occupations are no hindrance to recollection and interior devotion, for they do not occupy the understanding, but leave it free to be able to think of God"—*Hoc maxime curant spiritualibus exercitiis dediti, taliter se circa exteriora occupare ut devotionis spiritum non exstinguant: unde licet extrinsecus bonorum operum exercitiis fatigentur in corpore, intrinsecus tamen reficiuntur in mente.* Thus a very ancient and very spiritual father, Father Master Nadal, used to say that there were two sorts of person that he greatly envied in religion—novices, because they did not mind nor spend their time on anything else than their spiritual progress; and lay brothers, because, having their understanding unpreoccupied and disengaged, they are able to pass the whole day in prayer.

St. John Climacus relates that there was in a monastery a cook, a very busy man, owing to the great number of religious—he says there were two hundred and thirty, besides guests; and in the midst of all his occupations he kept up a very great interior recollection, and had further attained to the gift of tears. St. John Climacus wondered, and asked him how he had attained it in the midst of so great and continual occupation. After much importunity

he answered at last: "I never think that I am serving men, but God, and always hold myself unworthy of quiet and repose; and the sight of this material fire makes me always weep, and think of the bitterness of the everlasting fire."

It is told of St. Catherine of Siena in her Life that she suffered much persecution from her parents, who heaped ill treatment upon her to compel her to marry. The persecution went so far that they ordered that no private room or cell should be allowed her in which to collect her thoughts, but occupied her in housework. Further, they took out of the kitchen a slave they had and put her in the place, so that she should have no time to pray nor do her other spiritual exercises. But, taught by the Holy Ghost, the history says, she built there within her heart a very retired spiritual cell and purposed never to go out of it, and succeeded in so doing. Thus as for the first cell, which she occupied before, sometimes she was within, sometimes outside; but out of this other holy spiritual cell, which she had built within herself, she never stirred. They turned her out of her former cell, but they could never turn her out of this. She pictured to herself that her father represented Jesus Christ; her mother, our Lady, her brothers and the rest of the family, the apostles and disciples of the Lord. Thus she went about her work with great alacrity and diligence, for though she was in the kitchen and busy serving, she was ever thinking of her Spouse, Jesus Christ, Whom she made account that she was serving; she ever enjoyed the presence of God and was with Him in the Holy of Holies. And she often told her confessor, when he had any exterior occupations and was forced to go on a journey: "Father, make within yourself a cell and never go out of it." Let us do the like, and exterior duties and occupations will not distract us, but rather aid us to be always in prayer.

CHAPTER X

Of the Great Benefit and Gain to Be Found in Doing One's Actions in the Manner Aforesaid

ACTIONS done in the manner aforesaid are called full actions, and they who live in this manner, according to St. Jerome and St. Gregory, are said in Holy Writ to live *full days* and to be *full of days* (Job xlii. 16: Psalm lxxii. 10); and that, though they have lived but a short time and died young, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *Being made perfect in a short time, he fulfilled many years* (Wisdom iv. 13). How is it possible in a short time to live a long time and fulfil many years? Do you know how? By doing full works and living full days. *Full days shall be found in them* (Psalm lxxii. 10). This second passage explains the first. From morning till night and from night till morning live as a good religious and servant of God; the servant of God lives a full day of twenty-four hours, since he occupies it all in doing the will of God. His very meals, recreation, and sleep are not empty and useless hours for him, since he directs and refers them all to the greater honor and glory of God and does them because it is the will of God that he should do them. He does not eat for appetite like beasts, nor seek his satisfaction and amusement in these things; rather he would be glad to do without any of them if such were the Lord's good pleasure. O Lord, that we could go without eating, without sleep, and without these recreations and amusements! O Lord, that one could be always loving Thee and have no need to meet and supply these miseries of the body! *Deliver me from my necessities* (Psalm xxiv. 17) that I may be eternally taken up with Thee.

I see that such is not the state and condition of this life; but the just man bears that with patience, though not without pain, saying to himself with Job and David: *I sigh*

before I eat (Job iii. 24) ; *I mingled my drink with my tears* (Psalm ci. 10) ; *Every night I will water my couch with my tears* (Psalm vi. 7). So should we do, shedding tears when we go to take our rest, saying: "Ah, Lord, what a misery that I have to lie here such a long time without remembering Thee! *Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged!*" (Psalm cxix. 5). When wilt Thou take me, O Lord, this poor exile? *Woe is me; how long is this captivity to last? Lead my soul out of prison* (Psalm cxli. 8). When wilt Thou draw me, Lord, out of the prison of this body, that I may be able to give myself entirely to Thee? Oh, when shall that be? Oh, how long is that hour in coming!" These are full works and full days. In this manner, the just lives long in a short time, and a few days of his life make many years of merits. But he who has not done good work, nor well employed the days of his life, though he has lived a long time and attained many years, is said to die void of days because he has spent his days and his years in vain, and he may say *that his years are few and evil* (Gen. xlvii. 9).

On those words of Isaias that King Ezechias spoke on recovering from his sickness: *I said, In the midst of my days I will go down to the gates of the grave* (Isaias xxxviii. 10), St. Jerome observes that just and holy men fulfil their days, as did Abraham, of whom Holy Writ says that *he died full of days and in a good old age* (Gen. xxv. 8) ; but the wicked always die in the midst of their days, and even do not get so far, according to the saying of the prophet: *Men of blood and contrivers of evil shall not live out half their days* (Psalm liv. 24), since they have let their years pass by to no purpose. So Holy Writ calls the sinner of a hundred years a child of a hundred years, and says that such a one shall be accursed. *The child of a hundred years shall perish, and the sinner of a hundred years shall be accursed* (Isaias lxv. 20), because he has not lived like a man, but like a child. Hence it is that in the case of the

wicked, death always takes them unseasonably, without their being ripe or ready for it. So, when it comes, they cry: "Oh, that I could have at least another year of life to do penance!" In the same way it happens to tepid and slack religious that, though they have been many years wearing the habit, they can count but few days in religion.

We read in the Chronicles of St. Francis that one of these holy religious was asked how long he had been a friar and he answered: "Not for one minute." The other did not understand and was much surprised at the answer; whereupon the servant of God said to him: "I know it is for seventy-five years that I have worn the habit of a Friar Minor; but for how much of that time I have been a friar with my works, I do not know." Please God that none of us may be able to say with truth what this holy man said out of humility. The matter does not lie in many years of religion nor in a long life, but in a good life. "Many count the years of their conversion, but often there is little fruit of amendment," says Thomas à Kempis. A few days of a good life are worth more than many years of a tepid and slack one. Before God there are not counted the years of life, but the years of a good life; nor the years of religion, but the years in which one has lived as a good religious. In the Book of Kings it is said: *A son of one year old was Saul when he began to reign; and he reigned two years over Israel* (I Kings xiii. 1). Yet it is certain that he was king for forty years, as St. Paul says: *God gave them for king Saul, son of Cis, for forty years* (Acts xiii. 21). Why, then, is it said that he reigned only two years? Because in the annals and chronicles of God they count only the years of good life; and it is said that he reigned for two years, because it was only for that time that he reigned as a good king. And in the Gospel (Matt. xx. 8) those who had come last to labor in the vineyard, though they had labored only one hour, were preferred to those who had come in the morning, because in that hour they had earned as much as

or more than the others all the day long. Do you reckon up at this rate how long you have lived in religion.

All this is said very well by St. Eusebius Emesenus: "We are wont to reckon up our years, and the periods of time that we have now lived; be not deceived, whoever you are, by the number of days that you have spent here since you bodily left the world; reckon that you have lived that day only on which you denied your own will, resisted your passions and appetites, kept your rules, and did your meditation and your spiritual duties well." Make up years of these days, if you can, and measure thereby the time that you have been a religious; and fear lest that be said of you which is said in the Apocalypse of the Bishop of the Church of Sardis: *I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive, and thou art dead: wake up, for I find not thy works full before my God* (Apoc. iii. 1-2). I know your works, says God; though men know them not, I know them well. You have the name of being alive, and you are dead; you have the name of Christian, and not the works of a Christian; the name of religious, and not the works of a religious; your works agree not with the name you bear, since your works are not full, but vain and empty. They are not full of God, but void of God and full of yourself. All that you seek is yourself in them, your own conveniences, your own honor and esteem. Let us, then, watch over ourselves; let us strive to make our actions full and our days full, that in a short time we may live long and be very deserving before God.

CHAPTER XI

A Further Declaration of the Rectitude and Purity of Intention Which We Ought to Have in Our Actions

THERE is a very good piece of advice ordinarily given to those who deal with their neighbor, telling them how they ought to be disposed in the works and ministries that

they do; and this same advice declares very well how pure should be our intention in our actions and with what detachment and simplicity we should seek God in them; the same is the teaching of those glorious Fathers and doctors of the Church: Jerome, Gregory, and Chrysostom, as we shall see. When you take in hand any work to the end that some good, general or particular, may thence accrue to your neighbor, have not chiefly in view the fruit and good success of the work, but the doing therein of the will of God. Thus, when we hear confessions, preach, or lecture, we must not have chiefly in view the conversion or amendment and profit of those with whom we speak or whose confessions we hear or to whom we preach, but the doing of the will of God in that work, and doing therein the best we can to please God. The success of such work, the amendment of our neighbor and his actually drawing fruit from the sermon—that is not our affair, but God's. *I planted, Apollo watered, but God gave the increase* (I Cor. iii. 6). To plant and water, says the Apostle, that is what we can do, as the gardener does; but the plants' growing, and the trees' bearing fruit, that is not the work of the gardener, but of God. The fruit of souls, their rising out of sin and being converted and growing to perfection, is all to be laid to God's account. The value and perfection of our work does not depend on that. This purity of intention, then, we must strive to have in our actions, and in this manner our intention will be very pure and we shall enjoy great peace. He who does his works in this spirit is not troubled when somehow the success and fruit that he aimed at in his good work is hindered or rendered impossible, since he does not make this his end nor set his heart on that, but on doing therein the will of God and making the best job of it that he can to please God. But if, when you preach, hear confessions, or do business, you are much wedded to the result and fruit of your good work and make that your principal end, and then in some way your design is

thwarted, you are sure to be troubled and come to lose sometimes not only peace of heart, but patience also and even suffer further loss still.

Our blessed Father Ignatius used to illustrate this by a very good example or comparison. Do you know, he says, how we ought to behave in our ministrations to our neighbor? As the Guardian Angels behave to those whom they receive in charge from the hand of God, to advise, defend, direct, enlighten, move, and help on to good so far as they can; but if their charges make an ill use of their liberty and prove rebellious and obstinate, the angels do not distress themselves on that account, nor are they pained, nor lose one jot or tittle of the blessedness they enjoy in God, but rather say with Jeremy: *We have treated Babylon and she is not healed, let us leave her* (Jer. li. 9)—so we should take all possible means to draw our neighbors out of sin and do them good; and after we have done our duty diligently, we must remain in much peace of soul and not lose heart because the patient holds on to his malady and has no mind to be cured.

When the disciples returned from preaching, mightily pleased with themselves because they had worked miracles and cast devils out of men's bodies, Christ our Redeemer answered them: *Rejoice not in that, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven* (Luke x. 20). Our joy must not depend on our success, even though it be as good success as that; but see whether you are doing works such as to merit thereby that your name be written in the kingdom of heaven; see if you are doing the duties of your office. It is in that that you should put your joy and satisfaction; as for those other successes and conversions and marvels, they stand not to your account, and the reward and glory to be given to you will not be in proportion to them, but in proportion to your labors, whether men be converted and improved or not. This is seen clearly, taking the thing the other way about. Supposing great fruit

gained and all the world converted by your sermons and ministrations, and you have not gone on as you ought, what will it profit you, as Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel? So in like manner, if you do what you ought, though not a soul be converted, not on that account will your reward be less. In a fine plight certainly would the Apostle St. James be if his reward depended on that, and he were to set up his rest on that, since they say he converted only seven or nine persons in the whole of Spain; but not for that did he merit less, or please God less, than the rest of the apostles.

Furthermore, we find another great consolation in this fact, that not only will God not ask of us an account whether we have gained much fruit or not, but He will not even demand an account whether you have preached a fine sermon or given a grand lecture. That is not what God commands us, nor does in that our reward lie; but what God commands and requires of me is that I do that which shall be possible and be in my power according to the talent that I have received—if little, little; if much, much; and with that He rests satisfied. *Of him to whom they have given much, much shall be required; and little of him to whom little has been given* (Luke xii. 48).

St. Chrysostom explains this very well. Treating of the parable of the talents, he asks what is the reason why the servant who gained two talents receives the same reward as he who gained five? When the master came to ask an account of the talents he had divided among his servants, the holy Gospel says that he came who had received five, and said: *Lord, thou gavest me five talents; thou seest that I have gained an increase of other five.* And the master says to him: *Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in a little, I will set thee over much.* He comes who had received two talents, and says: *Lord, thou didst entrust me with two talents. See here, I have gained an increase of other two* (Matt. xxv. 20-23). And the master answers in the same words, promising the same

reward to him as to the other who had gained five talents. What is the reason of this? A very good reason, answers the saint, since the gain of five talents in the one case, and of not more than two in the second, was not a matter of greater or less diligence, but because they gave five talents to the one, wherewith he was able to double the amount and gain an increase of another five, while to the other they gave only two; yet the one showed as much diligence as the other, and worked as hard as the other in making the best of what he had received, and so was able to merit and receive the same honor and recompense.

This point is very profitable and very consoling, being applicable to all things and to all offices and duties. If one man works and takes as much pains as another in the charge committed to him, he may merit as much as the other, although he does not do so much. For example, if I labor as much over preaching a sorry sermon as you over preaching a good one, it may be that I merit as much as you and even more. In the same way in studies; though your neighbor be but a poor scholar and you a good one, though he knows little while you know much, it may be that he merits more with the little that he knows than you with the great deal that you know; and the same in all occupations. Though I do not do my job to such a nicety as you do yours and my abilities and talent do not go so far as that, yet it may be that I merit more with the little that I do than you with the great results that you achieve. This consideration will help much to keep the one party from vainglory, the other from discouragement.

This is also the doctrine of St. Jerome on the same parable. "The master receives with like good grace and honor him who brought in four talents as him who brought in ten; for God regards not so much the amount gained as the good will, diligence, and charity with which the work is done." "God is more pleased with the affection shown than with the value of our offerings," says Salvian. As also says St. Gregory: "God does not regard what is given, but out of

how much love it is given"—*Deus non respicit quantum, sed ex quanto*. God regards the heart rather than the gift. Thus one with fewer works may please God better than another with more, if he does them with greater love. Herein clear shines forth the greatness of God, since no service, however great it be, is great before Him if it proceed not from great love, since God has no need of our goods and cannot increase in riches nor in any other good thing. *If thou beest just, what wilt thou give him thereby, or what shall he receive at thy hand?* (Job xxxv. 7). What He does look for and value is being loved, and our doing what is in our power. We see this literally laid down in the matter of the two mites which that widow in the Gospel offered. Christ our Redeemer was sitting hard by the treasury, or charity box, of the Temple, where people threw in their alms; and there came those Pharisees or those rich men, and some threw in silver coins, others perhaps gold. Then came a poor widow and threw in two mites. Christ turns to His disciples and says to them: *Verily I say to you, this widow hath offered more than all; because the others have given out of their superfluity, and even so have not given according to their condition, but she of her poverty hath given all that she had* (Mark xii. 43-44). So, says St. Chrysostom, in the same way God will regard those who preach, study, labor, and do other ministries and offices; He will not look so much to what they do as to the good will, love, and diligence with which they do it.

CHAPTER XII

Of Some Signs Whereby It Will be Known When One Goes After Things Purely for God, and When One Goes After Them for Oneself

THE blessed St. Gregory notes a good sign whereby to know whether in our ministrations to our neighbor we are seeking purely the glory of God or are seeking our-

selves. See if, when another preaches very well and stirs up the whole world and gathers much fruit in souls, you are as pleased as when you do the like. If you are not pleased, but seem rather smitten with sadness or envy, it is a clear sign that you are not seeking purely the glory of God. And he quotes to this effect the Apostle St. James: *If you have a bitter jealousy, and nourish in your heart feelings of contention and envy, your wisdom cometh not from above, but is earthly, animal, diabolical* (James iii. 14). This is not zeal for the glory and honor of God, but zeal for your being honored and esteemed as that other is. For if you desired the glory of God, and not your own, you would be glad that there should be many such men and that others should do what you had not the capacity nor knowledge to do. So the Scripture tells us of Moses, when Josue would have had him hinder several persons from prophesying in the camp, he answered, showing himself much annoyed: *Why are you zealous on my account? Would to God that all the people might prophesy, and that God would impart His Holy Spirit to them all* (Num. xi. 29). A servant of God ought in like manner to say: "Would to God that all were great preachers and that the Lord would give them much of His spirit, that thus the honor and glory of God might be spread wide and His holy name known and hallowed all over the world!"

We have a very good example of this in Father Master Avila. It is said of him that, when he learned that God our Lord had brought into the world the Society of Jesus by means of our holy Father and understood the end and institute thereof, he said that he had aspired for many years to bring this to pass, but could never compass it; and that the same thing had happened to him as might happen to a little child who, being on the slope of a mountain, should try with all his strength to roll a heavy burden to the top and could not do so by reason of the smallness of his strength; and then a giant should come along who took up the burden which the child could not lift, and carried

it whither he would with the greatest ease. By this comparison, in his humility, he made himself out a little child and our Father Ignatius a giant. But what makes to our purpose is that he remained as satisfied and pleased as if the Society had been instituted by his means, since he desired therein nothing but the glory of God and the salvation of souls. These are God's good and faithful ministers, who seek not themselves but Jesus Christ.

The true servant of God should have such a pure desire of the glory and honor of God and of the profit and salvation of souls that, when God would have this effected by means of some other person, he should be as well satisfied as if it had been done by himself. Wherefore it is a very laudable practice that some servants of God, who are zealous for the conversion of souls, do observe in praying after this manner: "Lord, let this man be converted; let this soul be gained to Thee; let the profit and the estate be made by means of whomsoever Thou shalt please; I don't want anything attributing to me." This is walking in truth and purity, desiring not our honor and reputation, but the greater honor and glory of God.

We may say the same concerning our own and our brethren's spiritual advancement. Whoever is pained or disheartened because he sees his brother growing and advancing in virtue while he lags behind, seeks not purely the greater glory of God. For though it be true that a faithful servant of God ought to have his heart pierced with sorrow to see that he serves not so great a Master with such diligence as he ought, yet it does not therefore follow from thence that he needs must fret himself or repine because another makes greater progress than he does. On the contrary, in the great sorrow he has that he serves God no better, it should be a comfort and relief to him to see that, though in his weakness he falls below standard, there are others who come up to what he would desire, glorifying and greatly serving the Lord. That dis-

couragement and distress which some feel is born of self-love and some pride or secret envy; for if you really desired the greater honor and glory of God, it is clear that you would receive much pleasure and content from seeing others growing greatly in virtue and perfection, although on the other hand you would feel sorrow and confusion for your not serving Him so well.

Secondly, when a religious does his duty and the things commanded him in such sort as not to mind whether they command him this or that, whether they put him in this office or that, it is a very good sign that he does things purely for God, since he maintains this equanimity and entire indifference by the fact of his seeking only to do the will of God, resting not at all on the matter of the actions he does. But if he does not do what is humble and laborious with the same good grace as what is easy and honorable, it is a sign that he does it not purely for God, but is seeking himself and his own taste and convenience. And so that holy man says very well: "If God were the motive of thy desire, thou wouldst rejoice in whatever way He ordered the affair."

Thirdly, it is a sign that you are not doing things purely for God, but for human considerations, when you expect your superior to thank you for what you do and the labor you undergo, giving you to understand by his words that you have done the thing well, or at least showing some sign of satisfaction, and are disheartened when he does nothing of the sort. If you did things purely for God, you would not wonder at that, nor take account of it; rather you would be confounded and ashamed when the superior gave you any indication, taking it to come of your imperfection and weakness, and you would complain of yourself and say: "Sorry and wretched creature that I am, am I such a child and so tender in virtue that it is needful to nourish me and keep me up with these things!" It is told in the "Spiritual Meadow" of the abbot, John the Younger, a monk of the The-

baid, who was the disciple of Abbot Amon, that for twelve years he served one of the ancient Fathers who was infirm; and though this Father saw that the task was so heavy and so engrossing, he never spoke to him one kind or loving word, but on the contrary treated him rudely. Finally, the old man finding himself near his death, and a great many hermits coming to visit him and being all gathered round him, he called this humble and patient disciple and, taking him by the hand, he said to him three times: "Stay with God! Stay with God! Stay with God!" and commended him to the assembled Fathers, to treat him as a son, saying: "This is not a man, but an angel; for these many twelve years that he has served me in my sickness, he has never had a good word from me, yet, notwithstanding, he has never failed to serve me with great diligence and affection."

CHAPTER XIII

How We Ought to Go on Growing and Mounting in Rectitude and Purity of Intention

OUR blessed Father Ignatius says in greater detail how we ought to mount in this rectitude and purity of intention: "Let all strive to have a right intention, not only about their state of life, but about all particular details; ever sincerely looking in them to serve and please His Divine Majesty for His own sake, and for the singular benefits wherewith He forestalls us, rather than for the fear of punishment or the hope of reward, though they should be aided by these motives also; and in all things let them seek God, stripping themselves, as far as possible, of the love of all creatures, to bestow their whole affection upon the Creator thereof, loving Him in all things, and all things in Him, according to His most holy and divine will."

There are several ways of seeking and serving God. To serve God out of fear of punishment is to seek God, and is

a good thing; because that fear, though it be servile, ceases not to be good and to be a gift of God, and therefore the Royal Prophet begged it of God when he said: *Pierce my flesh, O Lord, with Thy fear* (Psalm cxviii. 120). But if we should say to ourselves and have in our hearts this sentiment: "If there were no hell and I were not afraid of being punished, I would offend God," divines hold that such an act as this would be evil and sinful and show a will very ill disposed. Notwithstanding, to help ourselves with the fear of punishment, with the apprehension of death and judgment, thereby to excite ourselves the better to serve God and to abstain from offending Him, is good; and it is upon this account that the Holy Scripture frequently puts these things before us and threatens us with them.

Secondly, to serve God for the reward which we hope for in glory, is also to seek God, and that in a better way than the former, because there is more perfection in doing our actions for the motive of reward in glory than for that of fear of hell: this is to go increasing in perfection. Moses acted after this manner, as St. Paul teaches us, when he says: *By faith, Moses, after he came of age, made nothing of being the son of Pharaoh's daughter, who had adopted him: he despised that, and sought rather to be humbled and despised for God than to enjoy all the treasures and riches of Egypt, because he had his eye on the recompense and reward that he hoped for* (Heb. xi. 24-25). And the Royal Prophet said: *I have disposed my heart, O Lord, to observe thy law, looking at the recompense thou hast promised* (Psalm cxviii. 112). This motive is good also, and we should aid ourselves with it; but our holy Father will have us go further, and desires that we should still elevate our hearts and entertain higher thoughts. *Aspire to better gifts, and I will show you a still more excellent way* (I Cor. xii. 31). He is not content that we should seek and serve God in any ordinary manner, but he would have us seek and serve God for Himself, for His infinite goodness, and

for His being what He is, which is the highest of all titles.

The glorious Fathers of the Church, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory, treat this point excellently well. They liken those who serve God for reward to Simon of Cyrene, who took up Christ's Cross for a price reckoned as the hire of his day's work. So these people serve God for the price and day's wage to be given them. They say that we should not be solicitous and careful about remuneration, reckoning up at so much the remuneration and pay; for this is the part of hirelings and day laborers who seek their own interest. We should not serve God in this manner, but as true sons for pure love. There is a great difference, say they, between the service of a slave, the service of a servant, and the service of a son. The slave serves his master for fear of chastisement and the whip. The servant, or vassal, serves his lord for the pay and reward that he hopes from him; and if he is diligent in serving him, it is because in that way he hopes to thrive and be handsomely rewarded. But the son serves his father for love and is most careful not to offend him, not for fear of chastisement, which the son fears no more when he is grown up, nor for hope of getting anything from him, but for pure love. Thus a good son, though his father be poor and has nothing to leave him, serves and honors him on the ground that he deserves it for being his father, and takes it for sufficient reward of his service and labor that his father is pleased. So other saints tell us we should serve God, not for fear of punishment, like slaves, nor for hope of pay and remuneration, like hired servants and day laborers, but as true sons of God, since God has done us the favor of making us such. *See what charity the Father hath for us, in that we are called and be sons of God* (I John iii. 1); and with truth we call God, *Father*, and His Son, *Brother*. Since we are sons of God, let us love and serve Him as sons, and honor Him as a Father, and such a Father—for pure love, to give satisfaction to our heavenly Father as He deserves for being what

He is, for His infinite goodness alone, even though we had hearts and bodies without end to employ in loving and serving Him.

St. Chrysostom says very well: "If you have been found worthy to do something for God and then go seeking some other reward besides the mere fact of your having been found worthy to please Him, it shows that you do not know what a good thing it is to please God; for if you knew it, you would never seek any other external reward or remuneration." For what greater good can we desire or propose to arouse ourselves than to please and give satisfaction to God? *Imitate God as dearly beloved children, and love him as Christ hath loved us*, says St. Paul (Eph. v. 1). Consider, says St. Bonaventure, how liberally and without any interest of His own God has loved us and done us so many favors, and not only without self-interest, but to His own heavy cost, since we have cost Him His lifeblood. In this manner, then, we should love and serve God purely and without any manner of self-interest. Our very virtues and supernatural gifts we should desire, not for our own advancement and satisfaction, but purely for God and His greater glory, to have wherewith to thank God and give Him greater satisfaction. And the glory of heaven itself we should also desire after this manner. When we put before our soul the reward of the good that we do, to animate us to do well, that should not be the ultimate end on which our desire should finally rest; but our ultimate end should be the greater service and glory of God, since the more glory we attain, the better shall we be able to honor and glorify the Lord. This is true love of charity and true and perfect love of God. This is pure seeking of God and of His greater glory; all else is seeking ourselves and loving ourselves. This is the distinction which theologians and moral philosophers draw between perfect love, which they call love of friendship (*amor amicitiae*), and love of desire (*amor concupiscentiae*), in that the former loves its

friend for love of the friend and the good of virtue, whereas the love of desire is when I love another, not so much for his own sake as for the interest and advancement which I think will accrue to me from him, as when one serves the rich and the powerful in expectation of favors to be received from them. It may well be seen that this is not perfect love, but a love full of self-love, not so much loving your friend as loving for yourself and your own conveniences and interests. Thus we say that you love bread and wine with the love of desire, since you do not love it for itself, but for yourself and as something to come in to yourself; that is loving yourself. In this way they do love and serve God who serve Him for fear of punishment or hope of the reward which He is to give them. This love is largely mingled with love of self; you do not seek God purely and disinterestedly therein. This Christ our Redeemer gives us to understand when, after He had worked the famous miracle of feeding five thousand men, not to count women and children, with five loaves and two fishes, much people followed Him, to whom He said: *Amen, amen, I say to you, ye seek me and come to me, not because ye take me for God, as having seen the signs and wonders I have wrought, but because ye have eaten of the loaves and had your fill. Seek not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting* (John vi. 26-27), which is Christ and doing purely the will of God. Oh, what a good answer was that of the servant of God, of whom Gerson relates that he was greatly given to penance and prayer, and the devil, envious of so many good works, tried to divert him from them, and so assailed him with a temptation about predestination: "Why weary and fatigue yourself so much? You are not to be saved; you are not to go to glory." He answered: "I do not serve God for the glory of heaven, but for His being what He is." Thereat the devil stood abashed.

The glorious St. Bernard goes even further still. He would have us so forgetful of self-interest in the works

that we do as not to be content with loving and serving as sons, but go beyond that. The love of sons is all very well, nevertheless they sometimes have an eye to the estate and the inheritance, and think of that; sometimes, too, they love and serve their parents that they may not disinherit them, or that they may leave them an extra portion. "I hold in suspicion that love which is kept up by hope of gaining some other object besides the object loved; and when that other object drops from view, vanishes or falls off. That is no pure nor perfect love; true and perfect love is not mercenary. Pure love does not borrow strength from hope (of gain), gather strength, nor feel the depression of failing hope." He means to say that the true lover does not need to keep himself up with extrinsic considerations to serve God, or labor for what he expects they have to give him; nor would he be discouraged or cease to labor though he knew they had nothing to give him, for he is not moved thereto by self-interest, but by pure love.

But what shall be the love so high and perfect as to exceed and supersede the love of sons? Do you know what? says the saint. It is the love of the bride for the bridegroom, for true and perfect love is content with itself alone. It has a reward, but its reward is that which it loves; loving the beloved, that is its reward. Now such is the love of the bride, that seeks not nor aims at anything else than loving and, on the part of the bridegroom, to be loved by him; that is all its concern. Now in this way, says St. Bernard, we should love God, Who is the Bridegroom of our souls, so that we should stop and rest on this love for His being what He is, and that should be all our satisfaction and joy. True and perfect love is content with itself alone; the lover is content and satisfied with this love. This should be our merit and this should be our reward; we should not seek or aim at anything else than loving. The motive of our loving God should be to love Him; the fruit of our loving God should be to love Him; and the end

of our loving Him should be to love Him. I love because I love, and I love to love. *Is per se sufficit, is per se placet et propter se: ipse meritum, ipse praemium sibi est amor, praeter se non requirit causam, non fructum: fructus eius usus eius; amo quia amo, amo ut amen.*

St. Chrysostom takes up this subject and goes on with it very well. Think not, he says, that because you have not an eye to any reward or interest, your recompense and reward shall be less on that account; nay, it will be greater. The less you think of gaining, the more you will gain. It is certain that the more a work is stripped of all self-interest, the purer and more perfect it will be, inasmuch as there is no admixture of your own in it, and so it will be more meritorious. The more you turn your eyes away from all manner of self-interest and the more purely you aim at pleasing God, says St. Chrysostom, the greater shall your reward be. The further you are removed from the spirit of a day laborer, the greater shall be your daily wage, because God will not pay you as a hireling servant, but as a son, the heir of the treasures of his father. We shall be sons and heirs of God, and brothers of Christ, inheriting jointly with Him; we shall enter with Him into our share, inheriting and enjoying the goods of our Father Who is in heaven (Rom. viii. 17). The mother of Moses had hire and salary paid her by Pharaoh's daughter for her to rear her own son (Exod. ii. 9); but she did not do it for hire and salary, but for the love she bore her child.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Three Degrees of Perfection Whereby We May Ascend to Great Purity of Intention and Great Love of God

THESE three degrees are gathered from the doctrine of the saints and especially of the glorious St. Bernard. The first is when one intends solely and seeks the glory of

God in such sort that, in the things that he does, all his contentment is in God, in fulfilling and doing the will of God, forgetful of all things in the world. St. Bernard says: "Would you know, so far as can be known here on earth, a good sign, whether you love God much and are growing in that love? See whether there is anything outside of God that can afford you consolation and satisfaction." His words are: "Certainly, so long as I can reap consolation or delight from any extrinsic object whatsoever, I dare not say that our Beloved yet occupies the innermost fold of my affections and most ardent love." And this is what St. Augustine also says (Confess. x. 29): "He loves Thee less, who along with Thee loves anything that he loves not for Thy sake"—*Minus te amat, qui tecum aliquid amat, quod non propter te amat*. A singular and excellent love was that of the holy queen, Esther, who in the midst of her pomp and royal splendor could say: *Lord, thou knowest that thy handmaid, from the time that she was brought here even to this very day, hath never rejoiced in anything except in thee, Lord God of Abraham* (Esther xiv. 18). That is a perfect and singular love.

St. Gregory on the text, *Who build themselves solitudes* (Job iii. 14), says: "This is to build oneself a solitude, when one is so unseated and detached from all creatures and has lost love and affection for all things of earth in such sort that, though his position sets him in the midst of as many recreations and amusements as the world contains, for all that, he finds himself alone by himself, because those things yield him no contentment nor consolation. Such a man has built a solitude for himself, since all his satisfaction is fixed in God and so he finds no company nor comfort in aught else." Even here we find experience of this, when we have a friend in whom all our affection is centered, away from whom, even in a great company of other people, we feel ourselves in a solitude and altogether lonely because it was in him that all one's delight lay. In

like manner, he who has placed all his love and contentment in God and has cast off from him all affection for creatures, though he be much in company and in the midst of all the recreations and amusements in the world, finds himself alone because he has no taste for all that, but only for Him Whom he loves. They who have arrived at this, says St. Gregory, enjoy great quiet and tranquillity of soul; there is nothing to disturb them or give them pain; they are neither troubled with adversity nor vain and petulant in prosperity, since they have no love nor affection for anything in the world, nor fret themselves, nor change as things about them change, nor depend on such things, because they reckon nothing of them. Do you know, says St. Gregory, who has reached this point, or built himself such a solitude? He who said: *One thing I have asked of the Lord; this will I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life* (Psalm xxvi. 4). *And now what is my expectation? Is it not the Lord?* (Psalm xxxviii. 8). This point, also, the holy Abbot Silvanus had reached, of whom we read that, when he came forth from his prayer, the things of earth seemed to him so mean and shrunken that he lifted up his hands and covered his eyes, not to see them, saying to himself: "Shut yourselves, my eyes, shut yourselves, and see not any things of the world, for there is nothing in it worth looking at." The same we read of our blessed Father Ignatius, that when he raised his heart to God and looked at the sky, he would say: "Ah, how mean is earth when I look at heaven!"

The second degree may be that which the glorious Bernard assigns in his Treatise on the Love of God, when a man not only forgets all outward things, but himself also, not loving himself for himself, but in God and for God and in view of God. We must be so forgetful of ourselves and of all our advancement and interest, and love God so purely and perfectly, that in the good things which we receive at His hands, as well of grace as of glory, all our

contentment and rejoicing should be not for our own good and advancement, but because therein is fulfilled the will and good pleasure of God. Thus do the blessed in heaven, where they rejoice more in the fulfilment of the will of God than in the greatness of their own glory. They love God with a love so intense and pure, and are so transformed and united with His will, that the glory which they have and the happy lot which has befallen them, they do not cherish so much for the benefit and profit thence ensuing to them, nor for the satisfaction which they receive, as because God is pleased with it, and such is His will. So we should love God, says St. Bernard, as he did who said: *Confess to the Lord, because he is good* (Psalm cxvii. 1). He does not say, *because he is good to me*, but *because he is good*. He does not love as that other loved of whom it is said: *He will confess to thee, when thou shalt have done him good* (Psalm xlviii. 19); but he loves and praises God because He is good in Himself.

The third and last degree of perfection and love of God, says St. Bernard, is this: "When one is so forgetful of self that in what he does he does not look to see, *is God pleased with me?* but *how can I give pleasure and satisfaction to God, and God be pleased, satisfied, and take delight in the work that I am doing?* Thus all that he takes account of is the approval, contentment, and good pleasure of God, not remembering himself, nor setting any more store by himself than if he did not exist and were not in the world at all. This is the purest and most perfect love of God. This love is truly a mountain, a mountain of God, high, fertile, plentiful: *mons coagulatus, mons pinguis* (Psalm lxvii. 16); a thing of great and exquisite perfection, for that is the meaning of "mountain of God," a thing very grand and excellent.

But who shall be able to ascend this mountain so high? (Psalm xxiii. 3). *Who will give me wings as of a dove to fly and rest upon it?* (Psalm liv. 7). "Woe is me," says that

glorious saint, "that in this exile I cannot wholly forget myself." *Unhappy man that I am, who will deliver me from this captivity!* (Rom. vii. 24). *Lord, I suffer violence, answer for me* (Isaias xxxviii. 14). When shall I die, O Lord, to myself, and live for Thee alone! *Woe is me that my exile is prolonged!* (Psalm cxix. 5). *When shall I come and appear before the face of God!* (Psalm xli. 3). When shall I be, O Lord, united and transformed into Thee by love, wholly denuded and forgetful of myself and made one spirit with Thee, so that now I love nothing in myself, nor for myself, nor to myself, but all in Thee and for Thee? So St. Bernard tells us: "To lose yourself in a manner as though you were not and not to be conscious of yourself at all and to be emptied out of self, as it were reduced to nothingness, that is having your conversation in heaven, and not the affections of earth." This perfection is of heaven rather than of earth, as the psalmist says: *I will enter into the powers of the Lord: Lord, I will be mindful of thy righteousness alone* (Psalm lxx. 16). When the good and faithful servant shall enter into the joy of his Lord and shall be inebriated with the abundance of His love, then we shall be so absorbed and transformed into God as not to remember ourselves. *When he shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (I John iii. 2). Then shall the creature be in complete accord with its Creator, as the Scripture says: *The Lord hath created all things for himself* (Prov. xvi. 4). Then we shall love God purely, and not love ourselves for ourselves, nor any other creature except in God. "Our delight will be not so much our desires crowned to the full or the happiness that is fallen to our lot, as the seeing God's will fulfilled in us and about us" [St. Bernard]. All our joy will be not in our own joy, but in the joy and satisfaction of God. This it is to *enter into the joy of the Lord* (Matt. xxv. 21).

"O holy and chaste love!" cries St. Bernard: "O sweet and delicious affection! O pure and high-refined intention

of the will! All the higher-refined and purer, I say, inasmuch as there is no longer left in it any admixture of anything of our own; all the more delicious and sweeter inasmuch as all that is felt is of God. To be thus affected is to be deified and transformed into God." *We shall be like him*, as St. John says. St. Bernard alleges three comparisons to explain how this deification and transformation into God shall be. As a drop of water thrown into a great quantity of wine loses all its properties and qualities and takes the color and taste of the wine; and as iron, kindled and made red-hot in the forge, appears no longer iron, but fire; and as the air, receiving the brightness of the sun, is transformed in a manner into brightness, so that it seems the brightness is all one; so, he says, in our final state of bliss we shall lose all our own tastes, and all that we shall love there shall be God and for God. "Otherwise, how shall God be *all in all* (I Cor. xv. 25), if in man there remains still something of man?"—*Alioquin quomodo erit Deus omnia in omnibus, si in homine de homine quidquam supererit?* Our own shall have no part there; my glory and my satisfaction will be the satisfaction and glory of God, not my own. *Thou art my glory and the lifter up of my head* (Psalm iii. 4). Now though we cannot here reach so high, we should make it our endeavor to fix our gaze on this height; for the farther we advance and approach to it, the greater will be our perfection and union with God. And so St. Bernard concludes: "This, eternal Father, is the will of Thy Son in our regard; this His prayer for us to Thee, His God and Father: *I will that as I and thou are one, so also they may be one in us* (John xvii. 21); that is to say, that they love Thee for Thine own sake and themselves only in Thee. This is the end, this the consummation, this is perfection, this peace, this the joy of the Lord, this *silence in heaven* (Apoc. viii. 1)." This is the end and furthest perfection to which we can attain.

FOURTH TREATISE

ON UNION AND FRATERNAL CHARITY



CHAPTER I

Of the Merit and Excellence of Charity and Fraternal Union

BEHOLD, says the Prophet David, *how good and pleasant a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together in unison!* (Psalm cxxxii. 1). St. Jerome speaks of this psalm as applying properly to religious. "Lo," he says, "what a good thing, what a subject of great joy it is, that for one brother we have left there in the world, we find so many gathered here in religion," who live and cherish us better than our brothers in the flesh. "My brother in the flesh," the saint goes on to say, "does not love me so much as my fortune." That is what our relations are after. It is all self-interest. For that, they go after us; for that, they trouble us; and when that motive does not exist, they care nothing about us.* This is not true love, but self-interest. But your spiritual brothers, who have already left and spurned all they had of their own, do not come here to seek after other people's property. They love not your fortune, but your soul. That is true love. So says St. Ambrose: "The brotherhood of the spirit is greater than that of the flesh; for the brotherhood of flesh and blood makes us like one another in body, but the brotherhood of the spirit makes us all have one heart and one soul, as was said of the first believers" (Acts iv. 32).

St. Basil insists very well on this great union of religious. "What thing more agreeable, what thing more happy and

* *Note to American Edition.*—The author is here no doubt thinking of the bitter family disputes over titles and inheritances so common in his day. No one had a truer appreciation of the beauty of family affection than Rodriguez. Elsewhere he says (Volume II, Treatise I, Chapter 19): "What makes the mother not feel the continual labors she has in rearing her child but love? What makes the wife tend night and day her sick husband but love?"

blessed, what thing more marvelous and admirable can be imagined?—to see men of so many different nations and countries so conformable and alike in their customs and mode of procedure that they seem to be but one soul in many bodies, and many bodies the instruments of one soul” —*Homines ex diversis nationibus ac regionibus profectos in unum veluti coaluisse, ut in pluribus corporibus per exactam morum ac disciplinae similitudinem adeo in unum veluti coaluisse, ut in pluribus corporibus unus modo esse animus videatur, vicissimque plura corpora mentis unius instrumenta cernantur.*” That is set down in the Life of our blessed Father Ignatius for a great marvel and almost a miracle that God has wrought in the Society, to see a union and conformity so great and so well set between men of such different nations, so different and unequal either in natural character or in rank or in inclination or in individual bent and disposition. Though our natures differ, yet grace and virtues and supernatural gifts make us mutually conformable and one. *God it is who maketh men of one manner to dwell in a house* (Psalm lxvii. 7). That is the sense of the text.

And so great is the favor that the Lord in His goodness and mercy does us herein, that not only we who are here in religion enjoy it, but the odor thereof spreads and diffuses itself also to those outside in the world, to their great edification and profit and the great glory of God our Lord. Thus we see in the case of many of those who enter the Society that, when they are asked what moved and inclined them thereto, they say it was this union and brotherly spirit which they saw in it. This agrees very well with what St. Augustine says on these same words: *Behold what a good and pleasant thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*: “At this sound so pleasant, at this voice so sweet, men have been roused to leave their parents and properties and band together in religious life. This is the trumpet that has called them together and united them

from various quarters of the world, taking this union and mutual charity to be a heavenly life. Thus it is that has brought forth monasteries and peopled religious houses: this the lodestone that has attracted hearts."—*Iste dulcis sonus, ista melodia etiam monasteria peperit*. Thus, of the three things that the Wise Man mentions as very pleasing to God, the first is *concord and union among brethren* (Ecclus. xxv. 1).

We have two precepts of this charity. The one is the first and principal commandment, to love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, and with all our strength. The second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. It is of this second precept that we have to treat here; since that it is that makes the union and brotherhood of which we purpose to treat. This union of souls and hearts is the effect and property of this charity and love, which, as St. Denis says, has the power to unite and draw things to one another. So St. Paul calls it *the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14), the perfect tie and bond which binds together things that were apart and makes of many wills one. It makes me seek for others what I seek for myself; it makes me seek it as for myself; it makes my friend a second self; it makes us be as one thing. So St. Augustine approved the saying of him who called his friend, "the half of my soul"—*dimidium animae meae*—one soul divided among two bodies. That we may see the value and excellence of this charity and love of our neighbor and what a store the Lord sets by it, let us begin with these last words of Christ. St. Chrysostom here calls attention to the fact that, when Christ our Lord has laid down this first and greatest commandment of loving God, He proceeds at once to the second commandment of loving our neighbor and says that it is next to the first. See, says the saint, the goodness and bounty of the Lord, that notwithstanding the infinite distance there is between man and God, He requires us to love our neighbor with a love so near and so like to the love with which we love God.

He fixes in a manner the same measure to the love of our neighbor as He fixed to the love of God, since of God He says that we should love Him with our whole heart and with our whole soul and of our neighbor He says that we should love him as we love ourselves. As when here on earth we wish well to a person and would fain commend him to another, we are wont to say: "If you love him, you will be loving me," so, says St. Chrysostom, that is what Christ our Redeemer wished to tell us in saying *the second is like to the first* (Matt. xxii. 39); if you love your neighbor, you will be loving God. And so He said to St. Peter, *Feed my sheep* (John xxi. 17), as though He would say: "If you love me, take care of them who are mine, and in that it will be seen that you love me in right down good earnest."

But further, the Lord wishes us to love our neighbor with the same love wherewith we love Him. This is the new commandment that He gives us. *A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another as I have loved you* (John xiii. 34). As Christ has loved us purely for God and for God's sake, so He wishes also that we should love our neighbor for God and for God's sake. He calls it a new commandment, says St. Augustine, not only because He has newly explained and newly commended it to us by word and example, but because it is really something new that He is asking of us. Natural love is a love very old and very ancient, founded as it is on flesh and blood; it is a love that not only the good but the wicked also feel; and not only men, but dumb animals. *Every animal loveth his own like* (Ecclus. xiii. 19). But the love wherewith Christ would have us love our neighbors and brethren is a new love, because it must be a love spiritual and supernatural, loving our neighbor for God with the same love of charity wherewith we love God. And so theologians and saints observe that the love wherewith we love God for God and that wherewith we love our neighbor for God, is one and

the same charity and virtue. They call it a theological, that is to say, a divine, virtue; a virtue that has God for its aim and object, because the infinite goodness of God is worthy of being loved for its own sake, and for it at the same time we also love our neighbor.

Finally, in the whole of Holy Writ we shall find no point more strongly urged nor more frequently recommended and repeated, than this union and fraternal charity. And Christ our Redeemer at the time of His leave-taking, in that last discourse at the Supper, harks back upon it to commend it to us once and again. *This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you.* And again He says: *This I command you, that ye love one another* (John xv. 12, 17). This I command you as My last will and testament. He would have us thereby see how much He desired that this should be stamped and rooted in our hearts, knowing of what importance it was for us, and that thereon depended the whole law and the fulfilment of all the rest of the commandments, according to the saying of the Apostle: *He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law* (Rom. viii. 8). And thence His beloved disciple took this doctrine; he seems to treat of nothing else in his canonical epistles, having sucked it in from the breasts of his Master. St. Jerome tells of him that, when he was very old and could scarcely go to church, but it was necessary for his disciples to carry him in their arms, his only preaching was this: "My sons, love one another." His disciples, wearied and tired of his always repeating the same thing, said to him: "Master, why do you always tell us that?" He replied, says St. Jerome, in a sentence worthy of St. John: "Because it is the Lord's commandment; and if you fulfil it, that alone is sufficient." *For all the law is fulfilled in one saying: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself* (Gal. v. 14). If you keep this commandment, you keep all.

St. Augustine here reflects on the weight and stress that the Lord laid on this commandment, wishing it to be the

sign and device by which the world should know us and take us for His disciples. *In this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one for another* (John xiii. 35). Christ our Redeemer does not stop here, but in the prayer which He made to His eternal Father (John xvii.), He not only wishes that hereby men should know us for His disciples, but also that there should be such a union and brotherhood amongst us as to be enough to convince the world of the truth of our faith and religion, and that Christ is the Son of God. *I ask thee, Eternal Father, not only for these my disciples, but also for all those who by means of them are to believe in me, that they may all be one among themselves, as thou in me and I in thee, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me* (John xvii. 20). Could He have said more to heighten the excellence of this union and brotherhood, since it is enough and should be enough for the world to trust it to be the work of the coming of the Son of God into the world, and yield itself up to receive the Christian doctrine and religion?

The truth and force of this is well seen in what happened to Pacomeus, who, being a soldier in the army of Constantine the Great and a heathen, had no rations to give to his soldiers; and they were dying of hunger. In this plight they came to a town where they met with a kind reception, and the townsmen banded together to bring them all things needful in such plenty and with such good will that Pacomeus was amazed and asked who these people were that they were so inclined to do good. They answered him that they were Christians, whose institute it was to harbor all and help all and do them good. He lifted up his hands to heaven and, calling God to witness, he pledged himself to the Christian religion. That was his motive for becoming a convert and believing that this was the true faith and religion.

The Redeemer of the world adds another thing that is very consoling: *I ask thee, Eternal Father, that they may*

be one with one another, that the world may know that thou lovest them for themselves as thou lovest me for myself (John xvii. 23). One of the chief signs whereby is seen a love of special predilection borne by God to a congregation—a privileged and singular love on the model and likeness of the love that He bears to His own Son—is His giving them this grace of union and brotherhood with one another, as we see He gave and imparted it to the primitive Church, to those people who enjoyed the first-fruits of the Spirit. And so says St. John: *If we love one another, God abideth in us, and his charity is perfect in us* (I John iv. 12). If we love one another, it is a sign that God dwells in us and loves us much. If *where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*, so He says (Matt. xviii. 26), what shall it be where so many are united and gathered together in His name and for His love? In order, then, that we may enjoy these so many good things and hold this so great assurance of God's dwelling in us and loving us with a special love, let us endeavor to maintain ourselves always in this charity and union.

CHAPTER II

Of the Need We Have of This Charity and Union, and of Some Means to Preserve Us in the Same

BUT above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection (Col. iii. 14). The Apostle St. Paul teaches and recommends to us many virtues, but above all, he says, I recommend charity, which is the tie and security of the life of all. The same does the Apostle St. Peter say: *Before all things I recommend to you charity and unbroken union one with another* (I Pet. iv. 8). Hence we can gather of how much importance this virtue is since these holy apostles and princes of the Church recommend it so much as to

say that it is to be *above all* and *before all*, so that of this we should always make greater account than of all other things.

In the first place it is easy to see the general necessity of this charity, for what religious order could exist without union and conformity? And to say nothing of a religious order, no gathering or community of men could continue without some sort of union and order. Take away from a multitude any vestige of association and order, and what will be left but a Babylon, a City of Confusion, a pandemonium? The proverb says: "Where there is a multitude, there is confusion." Understand this if the multitude be without order and union, because when well ordered and united, it is nothing short of a hierarchy. So all gatherings of men and commonwealths, however barbarous they be, always contrive to get some union and order, depending all on one head or on a number who stand for one government. We see this even in animals, not only in bees—for in them wonderful is the instinct which nature has given them in this respect—but even in wolves and lions and other wild beasts, for by the very instinct of self-preservation they contrive some union, since by division they would come to an end and perish. Even of the devils themselves, though they are spirits of division and sowers of tares, Christ Himself says that we must not believe that they are divided among themselves for the very reason that *if Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?* (Luke xi. 18). And to this same purpose He alleges there that principle so certain and so proved by experience: *Ever kingdom divided against itself shall be laid waste, and house upon house shall fall* (Luke xi. 17). A kingdom divided against itself needs no enemies to destroy and lay it waste; the inhabitants themselves will go about destroying and leveling down one another, and things will go tumbling over one another. So Plato comes to say that there is nothing in a commonwealth more pernicious than dis-

cord and disunion, nor anything more useful and profitable than peace and mutual union. St. Jerome says this of religious life, and says it more forcibly. It is this unity and charity, he says, which makes religious be religious; without it, a monastery is a hell and its inmates, devils. For what greater hell can there be than for people who must be always in bodily conjunction with one another and deal with one another daily, to hold different wills and opinions? But if there be union and charity, religion will be a paradise on earth and they who live therein will be angels, beginning here on earth to enjoy the peace and quiet which angels enjoy. And St. Basil confirms this statement. Men living in religion, he says, are in that peace and charity and union which makes them like angels, among whom there are no lawsuits nor contentions nor dissensions. St. Lawrence Justinian says that there is not here on earth any so lively presentiment of the society of heaven and the heavenly Jerusalem as the society of religious united in love and charity. It is a life of angels, a life of heaven. *Truly God is in this place; this is none other than the house of God and gate of heaven* (Gen. xxviii. 16-17).

But to leave generalities and come to the particular need that we have of this union and fraternal charity, our Father, treating of the means whereby the Society will be preserved and augmented in its spiritual good, says that one of the principal means that will aid much thereto will be this union and mutual charity. And besides general reasons, which show the necessity of this union in any order and community, there are particular reasons making it more necessary for us. The first is because the Society is a squadron of soldiers whom God has newly sent to support His Church, aid her in the war that she wages against the world and the devil, and gain souls for heaven. It is this that the patent of our Institute sets forth; this is the proclamation made in the bull of erection of our Society: "Whoever desires to enlist under the standard of the cross and

give in his name for this service, and so forth." And this it is that is meant by the name of "Company" which we have taken. We are a company of soldiers; we beat our drums, we show our colors, we gather recruits to fight against the enemies of the cross. If the squadron be compact and in good order, all acting with one accord, they will break through rocks and none will put them to the rout. A very strong thing that! So the Holy Ghost likens the Church to *an army terrible in battle array* (Cant. vi. 3), a squadron well drawn up in camp. When a squadron is well drawn up and linked together man with man, it leaves no opening for anyone to break through, since all support one another. But, disunited and disordered, it is a very weak thing, easily broken up, readily put to rout. In the Second Book of Kings, David by way of saying that he has overcome his enemies says: *The Lord hath divided mine enemies before me, even as waters are divided* (II Kings v. 20). And the mountain where this happened was called *Baalpharasim*; that is, the place of division, which shows that to divide and to vanquish is one and the same thing, and the place of division is taken for the place of victory. Writers on war say that an army in confusion and disorder marches to a butchery rather than to a battle; and there is nothing more inculcated in military discipline than not to break or disorder the squadron, but make sure that it shall always be well united and in order, unit in touch with unit and every man at his post. Not only the common good, but the particular good of each individual soldier, depends on this order's being kept, since with the loss of the squadron the individual will be lost also.

So it will be in our company and squadron. If we are united and back one another up and all agree together, we shall break through our enemies and by none shall we be overcome or routed. *Brother holpen by brother is as a strong city* (Prov. xviii. 19). *A triple-trilled cord is hardly broken* (Eccles. iv. 12). When many strings are joined

together and make one, the result is very strong. In the cord of the crossbow, those threads of which it is composed have singly little or no strength at all; but, many together, we see that they are strong enough to bend strong steel. So shall we be, if we are united and all go together.

St. Basil, animating religious hereto, says: "Consider with what union and unanimity these Maccabees fought the battles of the Lord." And of those large armies of more than three hundred thousand men Holy Scripture says in the Books of Kings that *they marched out as though they were one man* (I Kings xi. 7), since they all went with one and the same will and mind, and in this way they struck fear and terror into their enemies and gained great victories. In this spirit we must fight the spiritual wars of the Lord; and so we shall gather great fruit of souls by our ministries and amaze and confound our enemies. The devil himself, says St. Basil, will be afraid and not dare to attack us, seeing us so united against him, and will lose all hope of doing us any harm.

Our Father puts this for one of the chief reasons why this union is particularly necessary for us: "Let union and mutual conformity," he says, "be most diligently secured, and nothing to the contrary permitted, to the end that, united to one another by the bond of fraternal charity, they may be able better and more effectually to employ themselves in the service of God and assistance of their neighbor." And in another place he says that without this union the Society cannot be preserved nor governed nor gain the end for which it was instituted. It is certain that, nourishing divisions, parties, or dissensions within our own body, not only shall we never attain the end of our institute, which is to gain souls to God, but we shall not be able to govern or preserve our own selves. If soldiers, who ought to be united to fight against the enemy, were to turn to fighting one another, it is clear that not only they would not win the war, but they would destroy and overthrow

themselves; they are lost (Osee x. 2). *If ye bite and devour one another, see that ye be not eaten up by one another* (Gal. v. 15). If discords, envies, and murmurings come in among you, beyond doubt you will devour and destroy one another. This is what we have to dread in religion, not enemies from without nor persecutions and contradictions that the world may raise against us—they will do us no harm, St. Bernard says very well, speaking on this point to his religious: “What thing from without can come and supervene upon you, that can possibly disturb and sadden you, if here within all goes well and you enjoy brotherly peace and charity?” And he quotes that saying of the Apostle Peter: *Who shall be able to harm you, if ye are zealous for good?* (I Pet. iii. 13). So long as we are what we ought to be, very united and brotherly with one another, no contradiction or persecution from without shall be able to do us any harm or prejudice; rather it will help and serve for our greater good and improvement, as we read in ecclesiastical history of the persecutions which the Church suffered from without, that they no more did her harm than the pruner harms the vine; for one twig that they cut off, there spring up others more fruitful. And therefore it was a very good thing that one of those holy martyrs said to the tyrant, that what he did in shedding the blood of the Christians was to lay out the ground for the wheat to grow and increase the more. In the Book of Maccabees Holy Scripture praises the Romans for their great union and conformity among themselves. *They entrust their magistracy every year to one man, and all obey this one, and there is no envy nor jealousy among them* (I Macc. viii. 16). So long as the Romans remained united in this manner among themselves, they were lords of the world and brought their enemies under; but when they started civil wars among themselves, they were destroyed. Hence the proverb: “By concord small powers grow; by discord the greatest fall to pieces”—*Concordia res parvae crescunt; discordia maximae dilabuntur*.

Apart from this there is a particular reason why we are in greater need in the Society of aiming at this union, as our Father shows forth in the eighth book of his Constitutions. That is because in the Society there are special difficulties and obstacles in the way of securing this union, and therefore it is necessary to prop it up more and find remedies against these obstacles. The difficulties that there are in the Society in this respect our Father reduces to three. The first is the fact that, the Society being so scattered and poured out all over the world among believers and unbelievers and its members being so remote and separate one from another, mutual knowledge and intercourse and union become more difficult; the more so since, embracing, as the Society does, such different nations, among many of whom there is opposition and contrariety, it is no easy thing to get rid of an aversion with which one is born and which grows as one grows, and to regard a stranger, not as a foreigner, but as a son and brother of the Society. The second difficulty is that the men of the Society must be for the most part men of letters, and knowledge puffs up, and creates in a man a high opinion of himself and small opinion of others, and engenders also hardness of heart. St. Thomas says that learned men are not usually given to devotion so much as the simple and unlettered. Hence there is reason to fear that this may cause them to be less loving and brotherly with one another, each one following his own opinion and judgment and laying himself out in his own line and seeking to procure honor and reputation for himself, which is apt to be the root of great disunion and division. The third difficulty and impediment, and that not a small one, is that these same persons will be men of mark, hobnobbing with princes and lords, with city magnates and cathedral chapters; and from these intimacies there are apt to follow various party attachments, as also a disposition to seek singularities and privileges and exemptions and not live like the rest—a great prejudice to union and brotherhood.

Since for greater resistances greater preventives are necessary, our Father there lays down means to meet these difficulties. The first and most fundamental of all is not to admit and incorporate into the Society men who have made no effort to get their vices and passions well under, since unmortified folk will not endure discipline, order, or union. The learned man will be puffed up, will want privileges beyond the rest, will seek for the first place and take no account of others, will court the favor of prince and lord, will want someone to wait upon him; hence will follow at once coteries and divisions. The more learned and capable a member of the Society be, if he has no great fund of virtue and mortification, the more is disunion to be feared and his giving trouble in religion. They say very well that letters and high talents in an unmortified man are like a good sword in the hands of a madman, to the hurt and harm of himself and others. But if learned men are mortified and humble, *not seeking themselves but the things of Jesus Christ*, as St. Paul says (Phil. ii. 21), then much peace and union will ensue, since their example will be of great benefit to the rest and will draw them to follow in their path. This is the chief means of prevention against this and other evils and will of itself suffice if well observed. Beyond this, our Father goes on to propose other particular means to meet these obstacles. To supply the want of mutual intercourse and knowledge, owing to our people's living so remote and distant from one another, he proposes frequent communication by edifying letters, such as are usual in the Society. By such letters people keep up a good acquaintance with one another and animate one another to a common method of action, so far as the diversity of nations will allow; and that is a great aid to union.

Another very main means our Father lays down to maintain us in this union, and that is an exact observance of obedience, since obedience binds and unites religious one with another, making of many wills one and of many judgments one judgment. Give up self-will and private judg-

ment, as it is given up by obedience, and there remains one will and judgment common to the superior and to all his subjects. So united with their superior, subjects are united among themselves according to the rule: "Things that are equal to a third thing are equal to one another." And the more united subjects are with their superior, the more they will be among themselves. Obedience and religious discipline and observance of rules is a leveling line that smoothes down and levels all and causes great order and union. The ancients, to signify union, were wont to use the hieroglyphic of a lyre with many strings, which by reason of their being in tune and concord with the first make a most sweet melody. So a community with so many strings attuned to the first, which is the superior, makes a most sweet consonance and harmony. And as on a lyre, if there be a single string out of tune or strained, it goes for nothing and undoes the whole of that attunement and harmony; so also in religion, one member out of tune and not in concert with his superior will make all the consonance and harmony of that union go for nothing. Hence some have ventured to say that the word *concord* comes from *chord*; but they say better who hold that it comes from *cor* (heart), since all have one heart, according to that text in the Acts of the Apostles: *The multitude of believers had one heart and one soul* (Acts iv. 32).

St. Bernard says that as the cause of a ship's leaking is the fact of the timbers' not being well joined together or well caulked, so also the ruin and destruction of a religious order comes of the members' not being well joined and united one with another by the bond of union and fraternal charity. And our Father General Claude Aquaviva, in the letter he wrote on this subject, says that we should make as much account of this union and charity and guard it with as much care as though the whole good of the Society depended thereon, as indeed it does. And Christ our Redeemer, in the farewell prayer that He made on the night

of His Passion, asked of His eternal Father for us as a thing necessary for our preservation: *Holy Father, guard them in thy name, that they may be one as I and thou are* (John xvii. 11). And, by the way, let us consider in these words the comparison that He makes; as the Son is one with the Father by nature, so He would have us be one by love, and that shall be our guard and preservation.

CHAPTER III

Of Some Reasons from Holy Scripture Binding Us to Keep Charity and Union with Our Brethren

DEARLY beloved, if God hath so loved us, so we ought to love one another (I John iv. 11). The glorious Evangelist St. John, having declared the great love that God has borne us and shown us in giving us His only-begotten Son, infers and concludes from thence that we also ought to love one another. Here one might raise a doubt and ask with reason how from the fact of God's having loved us so much the apostle draws an inference and conclusion to the love of our neighbor, since it seems that he ought only to have inferred and concluded that we should love God for having loved us so much. To this there are many good answers. The first is that the apostle did this to show us the excellence of the love of our neighbor and the esteem that God has of it; as also it is said (Matt. xxii. 36-39) that when a doctor of the law asked Christ our Redeemer: *Master, what is the greatest commandment of the law?* He answered: *Thou shalt love God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength: this is the greatest and first of the commandments;* and He immediately adds: *And the second is like to this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* They were asking Thee, O Lord, only about the first; why dost Thou speak of the second?

All to show the excellence of the love of our neighbor and the great regard God has for it.

The second answer is that the love of God and the love of our neighbor are as two rings linked together and put upon the finger so that it is impossible to leave off one without drawing off the other; they must go together. So the love of God and the love of our neighbor are always conjoined; the one cannot be without the other, because it is by one and the same love of charity that we love God and our neighbor for love of God. Thus we cannot love God without loving our neighbor and we cannot love our neighbor with the love of charity without loving God at the same time, since God is our reason for loving our neighbor. And so to show that in loving our neighbor we also love God, the apostle immediately goes on: *If we love one another, God also is in us by love, and his charity is perfect in us* (I John iv. 12). And to show us that in the love of God there is included also the love of our neighbor, he said: *This commandment we have of God, that he who loveth God must also love his brother* (I John iv. 12). The love that God bears to men and the desire that He has and the store that He sets by our also loving Him, is shown in a strong light by the fact that we cannot love God without loving our neighbor nor offend our neighbor without offending God.

If a king were to love a courtier of his so much as always to put himself in front of him when any sought to injure or murder him, so that they could not touch nor hurt the courtier, nor attack him with musket or sword, without wounding and hurting the king first, would not that be an extraordinary love? Now this is what God does for men; He puts Himself ever in front of them, so that you cannot offend your neighbor without offending Him, to the end that you may beware of offending your brother for fear of offending God. *He who toucheth you, says the Lord, toucheth the apple of mine eye* (Zach. ii. 8). Thus, offending our

neighbor, we offend God; and loving our neighbor, we love God; and loving God, we love our neighbor. Since, then, the love of God and the love of our neighbor always go together and the one is included in the other and they never can be divided or separated, St. John was able to infer and conclude to either of these loves because, in asking that, he asked the other. But the reason why he inferred and concluded expressly to the love of our neighbor and not to the love of God, was that the debt of loving God is a principle *per se notum*, manifest and known of itself, and principles are known and not proved, only conclusions. And so he landed in the conclusion of love of our neighbor and stated it expressly, because one would not be certain to draw it.

The third reason is because St. John in his epistle is not speaking of a love bare and dry, but of a fruitful and profitable love, accompanied with benefits and good works. So he says: *My little children, let us not love in word or tongue only, but in deed and truth* (I John iii. 18), for that is true love. And to give us to understand that God requires these good works on behalf of our neighbors and brethren according to that saying of Osee quoted in the holy Gospel: *I would have mercy and not sacrifice* (Osee vi. 6; Matt. xii. 7), for this reason did he draw expressly the conclusion of loving our neighbor. Thus an absent creditor writes a letter to his debtor: "What you owe me, I shall be glad if you will give it to So-and-So, who is there with you, for it is one thing whether you give it to him or me, and I take it as received." In this way St. John says in the name of God, our creditor, to Whom we are indebted for so much love and so many benefits: *If God hath so much loved us, we also ought to love one another* (I John iv. 11). Since God has loved us so much and we owe Him so much, let us love our neighbors and brethren, since God has transferred to their credit the debt that we owe Him.

The charity and good work which you do to your neighbor, you do it to God, and He takes it as done to Himself.

Verily I say to you, that when ye have done this thing to one of these my least brethren, ye have done it to me, says Christ Himself (Matt. xxv. 40). This is another motive, and a very powerful one, for loving and doing good to our brethren, since in this way it will come about that, though looking at them we seem to owe nothing to any of them, yet looking at God and the great debt we owe Him, wherein He has yielded and made over His right to our neighbor, we shall recognize ourselves as bound to that neighbor even to being his bond slaves. And so Father Master Avila says very well: "When your flesh uses this language to you: 'What do I owe to that man to do him any good, and how ever shall I love him, seeing he has done evil to me?' answer that perhaps you would listen if the motive of your love was your neighbor himself; but since it is Christ, Who takes as done to Himself the good or evil done to your neighbor, on what side can there be anything to bar the course of love and good works, be my neighbor whoever he may be or do me whatever evil he will, since I keep no account with him, but with Christ?" Hence that is quite a good inference of the apostle, putting in the premise the great love that God has borne us and thence concluding to our duty of loving our neighbor. And to move us and persuade us more to this love, he puts into the same premise the mystery of the Incarnation: *Because God hath sent His only Son into the world* (I John iv. 9) to remind us and make us reflect that God has allied Himself with mankind, and so we should look upon our fellow men as akin to God and brothers of Jesus Christ, and love them as such.

CHAPTER IV

*Of the Manner and Character of the Union Which We
Ought to Have with Our Brethren*

THE glorious saints and doctors of the Church, Basil and Augustine, declare to us very well what should be the union that we should keep with our brethren by the comparison and metaphor which St. Paul draws from the human body and the conformity and union of its members one with another. See, they say, the union and conformity that obtains between the members of our body and how they help and serve one another, the eye the foot, the foot the hand; how the hand defends the head; and how, when they tread on your foot, the tongue says: "See how you are treading on me!"; how they all rush to the help of the weaker part, as may be seen if you have any wound or any other necessity. Each takes to itself what it needs for its sustenance and gives to another what is over. And what sympathy, as the doctors call it, there is, so that if the stomach is out of order, the head suffers; and when one member recovers its health, the whole body is glad and rejoices. *God hath so tempered the body that the members are solicitous for the good estate of one another*, says St. Paul, *so that if one member is suffering, all the rest suffer with it; and if one is whole, all the rest rejoice* (I Cor. xii. 25). St. Augustine reflects on this very well: "What is there in the whole body farther from the eyes than the foot? Yet, when the foot treads on a thorn, thrusting it in, at once the eyes look for the thorn, the body stoops down, and the tongue asks, 'Where is it?' At once the hand applies itself to draw it out. The eyes are all right, the hand is all right, the body, head, tongue, and even the foot is all right everywhere else except in one little point painful, where the thorn is, and yet all the members are full of compassion, and rush to the rescue with great solicitude;

and when it is put right, all rejoice." Now in this way we should behave towards our brethren, one looking after another as after himself, and one rejoicing at the good of others and compassionating the troubles of others as his own.

In these two things, says St. Basil, there is chiefly seen the love and charity that we bear to one another—if we are distressed and full of compassion at the afflictions and spiritual and corporal troubles of our neighbor, and rejoice in his good, according to the saying of the Apostle: *Rejoice with them that rejoice, weep with them that weep* (Rom. xii. 15). And so says St. John Climacus: "If anyone wishes to examine the charity and love he has for his neighbor, let him see if he weeps over his faults and is glad of his graces and spiritual progress." This is a very good sign of our love of our neighbors. St. Angela of Fulgino used to say: "My soul received more grace of God when I wept and grieved for the sins of my neighbor than when I wept for my own;" not that a man ought not to feel and grieve more for his own sins than for the sins of his neighbor, but to give us to understand by this exaggeration how grateful to God is this exercise of charity towards our neighbor. St. Bernard says that these two exercises are the two breasts of Christ's spouse between which He rests (Cant. i. 12); both the one and the other has its own milk, sweet and savory as honey, the one of congratulation and exhortation, the other of consolation.

There is further to be considered in this comparison of St. Paul, on the one hand the diversity of members and their differences in condition and quality, since some are eyes, some feet, others hands, each holding his own distinct office; and on the other hand we are to consider the union and brotherhood there is among them in so high a degree, each being content with the same office that he holds, without envy of any other, though higher. So we must behave; each one must be content with the office that

he holds and not envy those who have higher offices and ministries.

Further, never did a superior member despise an inferior, but valued it, aided and defended it all in its power. So those who hold higher ministries must not despise those who hold lower ministries and offices, but value them, aid them, and have great consideration for them as for members whereof we have need. *The eye cannot say to the hand, nor the head to the foot, I have no need of you:* rather God has in such manner tempered and ordered the members of the body that *those which seem the lowest and feeblest are the very ones of which we stand in greatest need* (I Cor. xii. 21-22). Otherwise, consider the feet, and what a breakdown would be ours if they were to fail us. The Lord has ordained all this, says St. Paul, in His high wisdom and providence, *that there be no schism* or division between the members of the body—*ut non sit schisma in corpore* (I Cor. xii. 25), but great union and conformity. So it is here in this body of religion, that some hold the office of head, others of eyes, others of feet and hands; nor can the head say that it has no need of the hands, nor the eyes that they have no need of the feet; rather it seems that they are just the component that we need most, to be able to live and do anything in religion: so we are wont to say that they are our feet and hands, because without them it seems we can do nothing. And this has been a high providence of God that there should be no schism amongst us, but much union and conformity.

This is the portrait of true union and charity; and hence we must learn how we are to aid and serve one another, which is a thing that goes a long way to the preservation and augmentation of union; and so the Apostle St. Paul much recommends it to us: *By charity of spirit serve one another* (Gal. v. 13). Thus it is great praise in religion to be an obliging person, ready to serve and aid and give satisfaction to all; it shows charity and humility and mortifi-

cation, and not to be as some are, who for want of mortification and readiness to take a little trouble and go a bit out of their way have no idea of giving pleasure and satisfaction to their brothers. In that so heroic act of Christ our Redeemer in washing the feet of His disciples, no doubt He meant to give us an example of humility, but of humility conjoined with the exercise of charity and brotherly love. *If I have served you and washed your feet, I your Lord and Master, it will be reasonable that you should do the same for one another* (John xiii. 14). I have given you an example how you are to behave to one another and how you are to serve and aid one another in humility and charity.

CHAPTER V

Here We Begin to Declare in Particular What It Is That Union and Fraternal Charity Requires of Us, and What Will Help Us to Keep It

CHARITY is patient and kind, charity envieth none, worketh no evil, is not puffed up, seeketh not her own interest (I Cor. xiii. 4). Union and fraternal charity requires the exercise of all the virtues; for what hinders and makes war on it is envy, ambition, impatience, self-love, want of mortification, and the like. Thus, to preserve it in us, there is needed the exercise of the contrary virtues. That is what St. Paul teaches us in these words, and so the only thing needed will be to declare them further.

Charity is patient, charity is kind. These two things, to suffer and to do good to all, are very important and necessary to preserve this mutual union and charity. For as we are men and full of defects and imperfections, we all give occasion enough for others to suffer at our hands; and as on the other hand we are so weak and so needy, we need others to help us and do us good. And so the Apostle says that in this way charity will be preserved and the com-

mandment of Christ accomplished by our aiding one another and overlooking one another's failings. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so ye shall fulfil the law of Christ* (Gal. vi. 2). St. Augustine on these words makes a good comparison to this purpose. Naturalists write, he says, that stags, when they want to swim across a river or an arm of the sea, to go in search of pasture on some island, dispose and arrange themselves in this way. Since their heads are so heavy by reason of their horns, they all draw up in single file and each one to lighten his fatigue rests his head on the haunches of him before him, and so they help one another. Thus they are all eased by resting their heads on someone else. Only the first stag has his head in the air, suffering this fatigue to lighten that of his companions. And that he may not be so very much fatigued either, when he gets tired, he drops from first to last and the one behind him takes his duty for another little while, and so they go on changing until they reach the shore. In this way we must aid and succor one another; each must make it his aim to ease another's burden and lighten his fatigue so far as is possible. This is what charity requires; and to withdraw one's own person from fatigue and leave the burden to another shows a want of charity. The more you do, the more you merit; you are really doing something for yourself.

St. Augustine says there that one of the things in which charity is proved and becomes most apparent is in suffering and bearing the ill humors and imperfections of our neighbors. *Supporting one another in charity, solicitous to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. iv. 2-3). *Charity suffereth all, and taketh all upon herself* (I Cor. xiii. 7) and thereby is preserved. If you do not know how to suffer and have patience with and support your brethren, be sure that your charity cannot last, for all your multiplied considerations and methods and remedies. If natural love and fleshly love suffer the importunate

demands of a sick man, as we see in the case of a mother attending her son or husband in sickness, more reason is there that the spiritual love of charity should be able to suffer and support the importunities and weaknesses of our brethren. And remember, says St. Augustine, that this office and exercise of charity is not to last forever, for in the other life there will be no occasion of suffering or overlooking the failings of our brethren; therefore let us suffer them and overlook their failings in this life, to deserve to gain the life that is everlasting. Let us not consider the lengthening out of time, for the work after all will last but a short time and the reward we shall receive will last forever. So important are these two things, to suffer and to succor our brethren, and aid them and do them good, that St. Augustine goes so far as to say that Christian life is summed up in these two things; and with reason, since Christian life exists by charity, and in this is included all the law, as Christ our Redeemer says (Matt. xxii. 5); and so what sums up charity, sums up Christian life.

Again, the Apostle St. Paul says: *Charity is not puffed up nor proud*. Love and friendship knows no such thing as pride and haughtiness; rather they cause a great equality among those who love one another. Hence the saying of the Wise Man: *I will not be ashamed of saluting a friend* (Ecclus. xxii. 31). With a friend we keep no ceremonies; we stand on no points of honor—friend does not look at friend to see whether he is the first to show courtesy. No one is ashamed of doing honor and an act of courtesy to a friend, and doing it first, because among friends there is great equality and straightforwardness; love knows nothing of these precedences. And so Aristotle said that friendship must be among equals. And another said: “Majesty and love go not well together”—*Non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur maiestas et amor*.

To sit on a throne and wield great authority, that is not compatible with friendship. You have to abase yourself

and humble yourself and put yourself on an equality with your friend if you are to have true friendship, for a friend is a second self.

Even in God the love that He bore to men had such power as to make Him abase Himself and put Himself on an equality with them. *Thou hast made him a little less than the angels* (Psalm viii. 6). *Thou hast made Him man as we are; and so He says to us: I will not now call you servants, but friends* (John xv. 15), which implies some manner of equality. See the tenderness of the love of Christ! Even here we do not say: "So-and-So is a friend of the king," though he be a great personage, a marquis or a duke; but "So-and-So is very intimate with the king," since to say "friend" implies a sort of equality. A God of infinite majesty has been pleased to make Himself so thoroughly man amongst men and has loved us so much, that He calls us not "servants," but "friends" in so many words. So here in religion charity has no idea of anything like haughtiness, but must needs cause a great equality and straightforwardness amongst all. This same equality, which is an effect of love, helps much to preserve and augment charity and union. One helps the other, and hence it is that where there is humility and straightforwardness among all, it is a sign of great union and brotherly affection. And so we see by the goodness of the Lord in the Society that as charity shines forth, so also there shines forth this equality and straightforwardness amongst all, "everyone desiring and seeking to yield the preference to others, esteeming all in his heart as if they were better men than himself" (Rule 29). And he who was somebody in the world feels more honored and rejoices more, as St. Augustine says, in the company of his poor brothers than in the dignity and nobility of his wealthy parents, for what he values and esteems is virtue, and all the rest he counts for nothing.

St. Ambrose observes very well what a help this is to the preservation of charity. These are his words: "It goes a long way towards strengthening charity, when, according to the Apostle's teaching (Rom. xii. 10), men try to gain ground on one another, who shall get the start at honoring one another and giving another the advantage; when one man takes every other man for his superior; when subjects love to serve and superiors know not what it is to be haughty; when the poor man makes no difficulty of the rich being preferred before him and the rich man delights in putting the poor on a level with himself; when men of rank are not proud of their quality and lineage and men of meaner origin do not vaunt themselves on being men as much as the noble; lastly, when not more deference is paid to great wealth than to good character, nor do the power and decorations of the unjust go for more than the unhonored honesty of the upright."

CHAPTER VI

Of Two Other Conditions of Charity and Union

CHARITY, says the Apostle, *is not envious* (I Cor. xiii. 4); rather he who really loves another desires his good and his prosperity as much as if it were his own. The glorious St. Augustine declares this by the example of Jonathan and the great love that he bore to David. Holy Writ says: *The soul of Jonathan was joined and united with the soul of David: one heart and one soul was made of both, because Jonathan loved David as his own soul* (I Kings xviii. 1). And the consequence thereof was that, though he was the son of the king, he sought the kingdom rather for David than for himself. *Thou shalt be King of Israel, and after thee I will be second* (I Kings xxiii. 17). Jonathan rejoiced in the good of David as though it were his own. The saints allege another example, which shows more the property and effect of charity, the example of the

blessed in heaven. There in heaven there is no envy of others' being greater than oneself; rather, if so it might be, each would wish his neighbor greater glory and would share his own with him, and that his inferior should be his equal or greater than he, because each one rejoices in the glory of another as though it were his own. And this is not so very difficult to understand; for if here on earth the natural love of mothers makes them rejoice as much in the good of their children as if it were their own, how much more will that heavenly love do, being so much more excellent and perfect? Let us, then, rejoice in the good of another as much as if it were our own, for that is the proper effect of charity.

To invite and animate us thereto, St. Augustine observes that charity and love make their own the good of others, not by despoiling anyone of it, but simply by being glad and rejoicing over it. And there is not much to wonder at in what he says; for if by loving another's sin and rejoicing therein a man makes that sin his own, because *God sees the heart* (I Kings xvi. 7), what wonder is it that by loving another's goodness and rejoicing therein he also makes that his own, especially as God is more ready to reward than to punish? Let us, then, consider and weigh this truth—on the one hand what an excellent thing charity is and what great gain and profit we make thereby, since in that way we can make our own all the good works of our brethren by merely rejoicing and taking complacency therein, and that even with greater security than in the case of our own good works, since no vainglory can arise from them as from our own; and on the other hand let us consider what an evil thing envy is and how pernicious, since it turns a neighbor's good to our own evil. Thus we are led to make it our effort to shun the one and embrace the other.

Hence follows the second particular, which the Apostle adds at once: *Charity is not ambitious, nor seeketh her own interests* (I Cor. xiii. 13). Anyone must be far removed

from that who takes his neighbor's good for his own and rejoices therein as though it were his own. One of the things that make the greatest war on charity and most hinder this union is self-love, or self-seeking, the looking after one's own conveniences and interests. For this reason our Father calls self-love a most grievous and deadly enemy of all order and union. Humbert in the Rule of St. Augustine calls it the bane of common and religious life, infecting and ruining everything. And although it is true that this self-love is the general enemy of all the virtues, yet it is particularly the enemy of this. Indeed, the very name tells us this; for if it is the love of self, it is not the love of the community, which is the love of charity. Self-love is division; it is something private and particular; it wants everything for itself; it seeks itself in all, which is directly contrary to charity and union.

Upon what the Scripture tells us of Abraham and Lot, that *the land could not hold them living together* (Gen. xiii. 6)—each owning so many head of cattle that the land was too narrow to afford them pasture, and so the shepherds of the one quarreled with the shepherds of the other and it was necessary for peace sake for the two to go apart—St. Chrysostom observes: “Where there is *mine* and *thine*, at once there are lawsuits and occasions of contention and discord even among kinsmen and brothers; but where this is not the case, peace and concord are safe”—*Ubi est meum et tuum, ibi omnium litium genus et contentionis occasio; ubi autem haec non sunt, ibi segura versatur pax et concordia*. So we see, says the saint, that in the primitive Church there was great union and concord among the faithful; they had all one soul and one heart because there was no *mine* and *thine* amongst them, but all things were in common (Acts iv. 32). That is the reason why there was among them so much harmony and union. And therefore all religious orders, inspired by God and founded on Scripture, have laid down poverty for their first and principal

foundation. Of this we make our first vow, that there being no *mine* or *thine*, and self-love finding nothing to settle upon, we may all have one heart and one soul.

No doubt it is a great help to preservation of charity and union amongst us to have divested and despoiled ourselves of all the goods of the world. But it is not enough to have no *mine* and *thine* in these temporal things; it is necessary that we should not have them in other things either, for if we have them, that will make war on us and be an obstacle to this union and charity. If you seek honor and reputation for yourself; if you desire the higher post; if you go about in quest of your own gratifications and conveniences, thereby you will come to disunite yourself from and disagree with your brethren: that is what commonly makes war on charity. Thence it comes that you are smitten with a sort of envy at seeing your brother display talent, shine and receive praise, be looked up to and made much of, because you will want that honor and estimation for yourself and think that the other robs you of it. Hence also arises joy, or at least an indescribable feeling of satisfaction, when another does not succeed in some affair, because you fancy that thereby he is being humbled and marked as inferior to you. Hence it befalls you at times to seek to throw your brother into the shade directly or indirectly, sometimes in an argument, sometimes by sundry little words that slip out unbidden and spring from the abundance of what you have in your heart. All this sort of thing is disorderly self-love, ambition, pride, and envy, which are the maggots apt to destroy union and mutual charity. *Charity*, says the Apostle, *rejoiceth not in evil, but rejoiceth in truth* (I Cor. xiii. 6). Charity takes no delight in the depreciation of others, but wishes them to rise and win and advance to greater things, and the greater the better. You are our brother; may you go on with a blessing upon you a thousand and a thousand times; that shall be my joy and my contentment (Gen. xxiv. 60). A

merchant trading for a company is nowise distressed at the gains that his partners make, nor at the good industry wherewith they make them; rather he rejoices greatly thereat because it all turns to his own profit and to that of the whole company. So we should rejoice at any good done, or talent displayed, or forward step taken by our brothers, since it all comes to turn and redound to the good and profit of the whole of that body of the Society, a member and part whereof I am and the good things whereof I enjoy.

CHAPTER VII

Of Another Thing That Charity Requires, and Which Will Help Much to Preserve It, Which Is to Have and Show a Great Esteem for Our Brothers and Always Speak Well of Them

CHARITY and love of one another must not be only interior, in the heart, but must show itself also in works, according to that text of Scripture: *Whoever seeth his brother in need, and nevertheless closeth his heart to shut him out, how shall we say that the charity of God is in him?* (I John iii. 17). When we are in heaven, as we shall have no wants, says St. Augustine, these works will not be necessary for the preservation of charity. Fire there, being in its own sphere, has no need of fuel and wood to keep it in; but here below without them it quickly dies out; so also here in this miserable life charity will readily die out in the absence of works to maintain and preserve it. St. Basil here applies to this purpose what the Apostle and Evangelist St. John says in his first canonical epistle: *In this we know the great love that God has borne us, in that he has given his life for us; and so ought we to give our life for our brethren* (I John iii. 16), if it be necessary. St. Basil very well infers from thence: "If the love that Christ asks

us to bear to our brethren must go so far as to give our life for them, with much more reason should it be extended to other things which commonly offer and are of less difficulty than giving our life for them."

One of the principal things which this union and charity requires, and a thing that will help much to preserve it and carry it on further, is to have a high esteem of our brethren. Rather, this is the foundation on which this whole structure of charity is founded and planted. It is not a love of fancy, which goes blindly, nor a love of mere tenderness and sentiment, arising from this heart of flesh which we carry, but a love of reasons, a spiritual love of the higher part of the soul, which regards higher and eternal reasons. It is that love which we call appreciative, which springs from the love that we bear to God, Whom we set above all things, and leads us to value our neighbor as a thing belonging to God. From the esteem and good opinion that we have of our brethren it comes to pass that we love them and honor them and reverence them, and do all other offices and practices of charity. So far as this esteem goes, so far also will go our love and all that follows upon love. So says St. Paul, writing to the Philippians: *Let us at heart esteem all as if they were our betters* (Phil. ii. 3) : that is the root and foundation of all this business. And writing to the Romans he says: *Let us vie with one another for the first turn in honoring one another* (Rom. x. 12). The glorious Chrysostom observes that he did not say that we should honor one another, but that we should get the start of one another in this office. It is not my policy to wait until the other man shows courtesy to me and takes notice of me first; everyone should aim at getting the start of his neighbor and winning the first turn. This is what our holy Father commends to us in his Rule: "In all things endeavoring and desiring to yield the better share to others." This is winning the first turn in honoring one another.

To come now more to details, one of the things by which we ought to endeavor to show a high opinion of our brethren is by always speaking of them well and respectfully, and in words that witness the appreciation and regard we have of them. Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read that everyone was convinced that he had a good opinion of him and loved him as a father. The result was that all also had for him much love and respect. There is nothing that so kindles charity and preserves it as the knowledge that our brother loves us and wishes us well and feels and speaks well of us. How many good effects spring therefrom! And so says Seneca there: "If you wish to be loved, love." There is no more efficacious means to be loved, since love cannot repay but by other love.

St. Chrysostom notes this well on those words of Christ: *What you wish other men to do to you, do it you to them* (Matt. vii. 12). The saint says: "Would you receive benefits? Do benefits to others. Would you obtain mercy? Show it to your neighbor. Would you be praised? Praise others. Would you be loved? Love. Would you that men should yield you the preference and the better thing and the place of greater honor? Be you the first to yield it, and contrive to give it to others"—*Vis beneficia capere? Confer beneficium alteri. Vis misericordiam consequi? Miserere proximi. Vis laudari? Lauda alium. Vis amari? Ama. Vis partibus primis potiri? Cede illas prius alteri.*

Besides, this speaking well of others is a thing that gives great edification, and the reason why it edifies is because it is a sign of the presence of great love and great union. And, contrariwise, any little word which directly or indirectly may throw another into the shade and take the shine out of him—the least breath of such a thing felt amongst us would be matter of great disedification, since people would at once gather that there was there some rivalry and envy; and consequently anything redolent of this should be far from us. Suppose your brother has his defects; it is

hard if he has not some good point about him. Take hold of this and leave that. Imitate the bee, which lights upon flowers only, not minding the thorns that surround them, and follow not the example of the beetle, which goes straight for the dunghill.

CHAPTER VIII

That We Ought Much to Beware of Telling Another, "So-and-So Has Said This and That of You," Where It May Give Him Any Offense

MY intention is not at present to speak of detraction, because I shall treat of it in another place; here we shall only notice one thing of great importance which serves our purpose. As one ought to take particular care not to speak ill of another, so when we hear anything said of another that may give him any displeasure or resentment, we ought also to take care not to tell him: "Such a one has spoken thus and thus of you," for this serves only to exasperate minds and sow discord amongst brethren, a thing very pernicious and much abhorred of God. *Six things the Lord hateth, and the seventh He heartily detesteth and abominateth, the sower of discord amongst brethren* (Prov. vi. 16-19). As we say we abhor a thing with all our heart, so the Scripture uses the like human language of God, to signify the height of His displeasure against such men. But if God detests such as these, men abhor them also. *The talebearer, says the Wise Man, shall defile his own soul, and shall be hated in all company; and he that dealeth with him shall also be hated* (Ecclus. xxi. 31). These are they who get the name of talebearers; this it is to go in for talebearing, a thing unworthy of men of probity, much more of religious. *Never give occasion to anyone, says Ecclesiasticus (v. 16), to be able to say that you are a talebearer.* What can be a more pernicious and prejudicial thing in a community than to be a scandal-monger

and to go about making your brethren fall foul of one another? That is doing the devil's work, for that is his office.

And be it observed here that to set one person against another, it is not necessary that the things told be grave; very small and minute things, things that at times do not amount even to venial sins, are enough for that. So it is this that we must make account of, not merely whether the thing said or related be of itself grave or light, but whether it is a thing that can upset or sadden your brother and cause in him some disgust or disunion with the other party. Someone has been thoughtless in saying a little word that gave others to understand something that was less to the credit of another in point of learning, or capacity, or virtue, or talent, or something like that, and you with still greater thoughtlessness go off to tell it to the other party; you see now what resentment you may have excited in him; you thought you were doing nothing and you stabbed him to the heart. *The words of the talebearer seem simple, and they penetrate to the inmost bowels* (Prov. xxvi. 22). There are some things that some people are wont to make nothing of because they look at them from I know not what point of view—or the fact is that they do not look at them at all; but looked at from the point of view from which they should be looked at they present such a different appearance that there is much fear and doubt that they amount to mortal sin, for the inconveniences and evil effects that follow from them; and this is one of those things.

Now if to say these things and sow these discords amongst brethren is a thing so prejudicial and pernicious and so much abhorred of God, what must it be to sow these tares between subjects and their superior and cause disunion between the members and the head, between parents and children! How much more abominable is this in the sight of God! Now this is done also when similar language is used of the superior. Great was the love and obe-

dience that King David's subjects paid him, and quite united they were with him; but when they heard evil spoken of him and his government maligned by a wicked son of his, Absalom, they refused obedience and rose up against him (II Kings xv.). Oh, how many times does it happen that, when one is living in right down good faith and putting much trust in his superior and judging well of all that he does and trusting to him his soul and discovering to him his whole heart, by some light word that another says all this edifice is thrown down, and in its place there succeed a thousand sleights of malice and duplicity, rash judgments, fits of reserve, murmurings; and sometimes this plague spreads so far that it infects this one and that one, and that one and another, and another and another! It is beyond belief what harm is done by a few light words like these.

But someone will say: "It is a good thing at times for a person to know what is remarked and said of him that he may tread warily and not give occasion." That is true; then you may tell him the thing but without letting him know who has said it, and that though it has been said in public, that none may excuse himself by saying that another would have told him before long. Let everyone look to himself. *Woe to him by whom the scandal cometh* (Matt. xvii. 7). And though the other importune you much to let him know who said it and you know the information would be a great gratification to his curiosity, still you must not tell him; it is a mistake sometimes to give such satisfaction to a friend. That is no good friendship, for you do him harm by telling him and do the other harm as well, and still more harm to yourself because you are left with a scruple about the harm that you have done to the one and the other.

The harm and bad consequences of such a disclosure may be well understood by this, that, when one makes known anyone's fault to the superior, that by his fatherly care and

providence he may be able to apply a proper remedy, according to the rule we have on this matter, he does not want the culprit to understand that it was he who made it known; and the superior does his best, and ought to do his best, to make sure of this secrecy as his rule recommends, that this may not be the cause of any bitterness or dislike among the brethren. Now if, when this is done lawfully and according to rule and with charity and desire of greater good, there still are these fears and it is needful to proceed with caution, with how far greater reason are these awkward consequences to be apprehended when one discovers to another who it was that spoke of his fault, doing this not lawfully nor according to rule, but carelessly and indiscreetly and in a bad way and perchance sometimes with some emulation or envy, or on other considerations not good, or at least which the other might imagine to be not good! St. Augustine highly praises his mother St. Monica upon this account, that when she heard often on one side and another complaints and words of resentment and rancor, she never told anything she had heard of one to the other, but only what might smooth them down and remove their rancor and go to unite and reconcile them. So we ought to act, being ever angels of peace.

CHAPTER IX

That Good and Fair Words Help Very Much to Preserve Charity, While Their Contraries Have a Contrary Effect

AMONG the things that contribute much to preserve and augment fraternal charity are soft and fair words. *A sweet word multiplieth friends and appeaseth enemies*, says the Wise Man; and, on the contrary, *A harsh word raiseth up fury* (Ecclus. vi. 5; Prov. xv. 1). Hard, rough, and bitter language awakens ill will and causes disunion, for we are men and feel such language and are disgusted

and stung thereby: hence we look not upon our brother as we did before; we view his conduct in an evil light and perhaps speak ill of him. This being so, it is of very great importance that our discourse be always so seasoned with sweetness and affability that thereby we may gain the good will of our brethren, according to the saying of Ecclesiasticus: *A prudent man maketh himself amiable in his words* (Ecclus. xx. 13). In the first place we must observe as the foundation of all that is to be said, that none should deceive himself herein by saying: "My brothers are very virtuous men and will not be shocked nor tried by one light word, be it a trifle haughty or ungracious; they will not mind that." The question is not what your brothers are or ought to be, but what you ought to be and how you should behave to them. If you say they will not be angry for so small a thing, "The smaller it is," answers St. Bernard, "the easier it is for you to abstain from it." St. Chrysostom says this rather aggravates your fault, that you did not take means to overcome yourself in so light a matter. You should not be naughty because your brother is good. *Is thy eye evil, says our Savior, because I am good?* (Matt. xx. 15). I say, then, that we ought to have a good opinion of all our brethren and not believe they are so thin-skinned as to be angry for any small matter; but this does not exempt us from using as much caution and moderation in dealing with them as if they were more brittle than glass and the weakest creatures in the world, not giving them on our part any occasion of annoyance or irritation, however weak or imperfect they may be. And this caution we should keep for two reasons. One reason touches ourselves; it is that, however much virtue another has, that does not make our action cease to be our fault; and again for a second reason, touching our neighbor, that not all people on all occasions are so well disposed, or so well in form, as not to be sensible of the offenses we commit against them. Everyone may know by himself what words or manner of saying them

may please or displease his brother, following the rule which the Holy Ghost gives us by the mouth of the Wise Man: *Judge of thy neighbor by thyself* (Ecclus. xxxi. 18). Let everyone consult himself and see whether he be content that they should speak coldly of him, that they should answer him sharply and command him after a haughty and imperious manner; and if he finds this will touch him to the quick, let him abstain from speaking in that manner, because his neighbor is a man like himself and may have the same feelings as he has.

Humility, also, is a very proper means to make us never speak but as we ought; for if we be humble and account ourselves the least of all, we shall need no other safeguard than this. This alone is sufficient to teach us how to behave so that we shall never speak a hasty word at which anyone may be offended, but always speak to everyone with respect and esteem. It is clear that no one would say to his superior: "Your reverence does not understand what I say," for he is speaking as an inferior to one whom he respects. If, then, anyone says these or the like words to his brother, it is because he does not take himself for his inferior, and so speaks to him without respect. Let us therefore be humble and, following the counsel of the Apostle (Phil. ii. 3), reckon ourselves the least of all; and we shall soon learn the words that we ought to utter and the manner in which we ought to utter them. But apart from these general rules and remedies, we will go on to mention in particular some sorts of words that are contrary to charity, that we may avoid them.

CHAPTER X

*That We Ought to Be Much on Our Guard Against Biting
Words That May Offend Our Brother or Give
Him Any Displeasure*

THERE are little remarks that bite and wound another, covertly reflecting on his social condition or intelligence, not so keen as it might be, or any other defect, natural or moral. Such remarks are very much against charity; and the wittier and smarter they are, the worse they are and the more harm they do, for they strike the hearers more and stay longer in their memories. And the worst of it is that he who speaks them is sometimes very much pleased with himself, thinking that he has said a clever thing and shown discernment; whereas in reality he very much deceives himself, and instead of showing discernment, he has only shown a poor understanding and a worse will, since he employs the understanding which God gave him for His service, in making pointed remarks that wound and scandalize.

Albertus Magnus says that, as when one has bad breath it is a sign of something wrong in liver or stomach, so when one speaks evil words, it is a sign of some illness at heart. And what would the glorious St. Bernard say of the religious who gave vent to biting witticisms? If any display of wit on the part of a religious he called a blasphemy and a sacrilege, what name would he give witty remarks at the expense of our brethren? All these things are very alien to religious life; and, accordingly, all that touches thereon should be very far from the mouth of a religious, such as the use of nicknames and poking fun at others and mocking them and the making or repeating of facetious couplets on the fault or absent-mindedness of another, and the like things. Neither in jest nor in earnest can they reasonably be tolerated, of which let each one

judge by himself. How would you take it that anyone should give you a nickname and that all the world should laugh, seeing how well the name fitted? Since, therefore, you would not like it done to yourself, do you not do it to another, for that is the rule of charity. Should you be pleased, supposing you had a slip of the tongue, that people should at once make a point not to let it fall to the ground, as they say, but make a story of it? Certainly you would not. How, then, do you will for another what you would not will for yourself—nay, what you would resent and angrily complain of if it were done to you?

Even the very mention of mocking and scoffing and calling nicknames is offensive and ill-sounding in the mouth of a religious; how much more the doing of such things! We should so much abhor them as not even to take their very names in our mouth, as St. Paul says of the vice of impurity: *As for fornication and all manner of uncleanness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becometh saints* (Eph. v. 3). And so it should be as regards this vice, and St. Paul goes on accordingly joining it with the other: *Nor foul or foolish talking, nor jokes that are unbecoming*. The very mention of such things is not in accordance with the holiness that we profess. St. Bernard says well: "If for idle words we have to give an account to God at the day of judgment, what shall it be of words that are more than idle?" What of words that wound the feelings of my brother? What of words that do harm?

CHAPTER XI

That We Ought to Beware of Wrangling, Contradicting, and Reprehending

WE must also avoid any wrangling with another or contradicting him, it being a thing very contrary to union and fraternal charity; of which St. Paul gives us

warning when, writing to Timothy, he says: *Do not contend in words, for it serves for nothing else but the disedification of the hearers.* And a little after, he adds: *A servant of God must not be contentious, but gentle and peaceful in his behavior to all men* (II Tim. ii. 14, 24). The saints much recommend this to us, and from them our Father has borrowed it and inserted it in his Rules. St. Dorotheus says that he had rather things should be left undone than see any disputes or contests arise amongst brethren in doing them, and adds he would repeat this a thousand times. St. Bonaventure also declares that there is nothing more unworthy or misbecoming God's servants than to insist on getting their own way and to wrangle with one another as market women are wont to do. And St. John Climacus goes on to say that obstinacy in maintaining one's own opinion, though it be true, is certainly instigated by the devil; and the reason is that that which usually moves men thereto is the excessive desire they have of human honor. To that end they aim at getting their own way, appearing wise and intelligent and coming out conquerors, or, at least, not seeming inferior to others; and thus it is always the devil of pride who is the occasion of this obstinacy.

Now in this, two sorts of faults may be committed. The first and greatest is his who first contradicted the other, because it is his obstinacy that began the dispute and kindled the fire, and so his fault is greater. And though for the most part the subject they dispute about is in reality of so small consequence that it is no matter whether the thing in debate be the one way or the other, yet the loss of peace and charity, which ordinarily are greatly impaired by these disputes, is of much consequence. The other says this in good faith, and understands the matter so. Let him alone in his good faith. There is nothing in it. *Dispute not about what does not concern thee*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xi. 9). Even though the thing in hand be of consequence and

you imagine that your brother may indeed receive some prejudice by adhering to his opinion, yet it is a good plan, they say, to bear with him for the present instead of contradicting him, but take him apart and tell him the truth afterwards, that he may not remain in error. Hereby the end is gained and unpleasant consequences avoided.

The other fault to observe here is, when it happens that someone contradicts you, you should not insist upon your point nor seek to push your opinion and get the better of him; but as soon as you have laid down once or twice what you take to be the truth, if others do not believe you, let them think what they please. This is done by lapsing into silence as though you knew no more—not, however, with the affected air which some take up as though they did not yield, but desired their opinion to stand and the blame to rest with the other party. *He that avoideth contention, gaineth honor*, says the Wise Man (Prov. xx. 3). And with reason does he say so. It is the property of noble hearts to bate one's right in season, and let oneself be beaten in the like contentions and wrangles. He who acts thus, does an act of charity to his neighbor by avoiding the bitterness and irritations that usually follow upon these disputes. He does an act of humility within himself, vanquishing the desire of coming out with the honors of victory. Likewise an act of love of God, cutting off the occasion of many sins that are almost inseparable from a war of words; as the Wise Man says: *Abstain from contention, and thou wilt diminish sins* (Ecclus. xxviii. 10). On the other hand, he who maintains his view obstinately, besides the disedification that he gives, is the cause of the loss of peace and charity with many unpleasantnesses and rancors that follow therefrom. And instead of gaining honor and esteem, as he thought to do, he loses it because they take him for a "swollen head," a man who likes coming out "top dog" and will never bate an inch to anybody.

It is said of St. Thomas Aquinas that in scholastic disputations he never peremptorily contradicted anyone, but said what he thought with incredible mildness and temperance of language, throwing no scorn on anyone, but rather paying honor to all, as one whose object was not to come victorious out of a dispute, but to get the truth recognized. The instance is also well known of those two old monks who dwelt together in one cell and never had contention or wrangle between them—how they wished to make trial to see if they could get up a dispute about a brick as to whose it was, and they did not succeed. That is how we should succeed in our disputations.

You should also beware of undertaking to reprehend and correct your brother, though you fancy you could do it with all charity and in the handsomest manner. That is the office of the superior. Now men take it with more or less of good will to have one superior or two to admonish and rebuke them, but they do not take it at all well for one who is not their superior to usurp that office. Men commonly have no mind to be corrected and reprovèd by their equals. We have also a rule forbidding anyone to command or rebuke another without authority from the superior to do so. As one cannot give an order without authority from the superior, so neither can one give correction. This is not a business to entrust to all. Even the superior himself, when he has to correct another and admonish him of his fault, must first look well about him and wait for his opportunity and measure his words, what he has to say and how he is to say it, in order that the correction and admonition may be well taken, and profit the delinquent, all of which points are necessary. And here is a man who will take upon himself without further ado to tell his brother of his fault on the spot, and often in the act itself, under color of zeal. This is not the zeal of charity, but often a thing very contrary to charity and more likely to do harm than good. Nay, even though there be

much justification for what you do, the other is readily tempted to say within himself—and it is a mercy if he does not say it out loud: “Who has made you superior and why do you meddle in the office of another?” *Who hath made thee prince and judge over us?* If you tell the other that what he is doing is against the rule, he may tell you that your reprehending of him is also against the rule.

It is related of Socrates that one day when he was at dinner with some friends in the house of a leading citizen who had invited them, he smartly took to task one of the company for some fault that he saw him commit at table. Whereupon Plato, who was also present, said: “Would it not have been better to have left this till afterwards and reprehended him in private?” Socrates replied: “And would it not also have been better for you to have told me this afterwards in private?” He cleverly cast back his reprehension in his face, observing that he was doing the very thing that he found fault with in another. That is what these reprehensions serve for. And not only is this no zeal of charity, but often it is bad humor on the part of him who gives the rebuke, and his impatience and lack of self-control, which makes him so offended at the fault of his brother and sometimes with what is no fault of his own at all. He cannot contain himself till he has come out with it, and therein he thinks to have found relief and satisfaction. He cannot, or he will not, mortify himself, and he wants to mortify the other. The spirit of mortification and rigor is very good for each one to maintain with himself, but with his brother he should always maintain a spirit of love and gentleness. This is what the saints teach by word and example, and it helps much to union and fraternal charity. Hence it follows that, if it is not good to rebuke and correct your brother even when you think you are doing it excellently well and with charity and kindness, much less will it be good if you point out to him his fault not so excellently well nor with such excellent reserve.

Thus we should be much on our guard against the practice, and generally against all words that may mortify our brethren.

Cassian relates that one day Abbot Moses, in dispute with Abbot Macarius, happened to say a word to mortify him and somewhat discompose him, and at once God chastised him, permitting a devil to enter into him, and such a foul and filthy devil, too, as to drive him to put into his own mouth ordure and dirt, until by the prayer of Macarius he was delivered therefrom. This shows how much God abhors this fault, since He so chastised it in one who was such a great servant of His and a man of such approved sanctity as we know the Abbot Moses to have been. A chastisement something like this we read of in the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis. An aged friar in presence of a nobleman of Assisi addressed another friar in some rough and harsh words showing some anger. But in the act of saying them he entered into himself, and seeing his brother troubled by the words and the secular disedified, he was kindled to take vengeance upon himself. So taking some dung, and putting it into his mouth and chewing it, he said: "Let the tongue chew dung that has poured out against his brother poison of passion." And it is said then that that nobleman was greatly edified and almost out of himself, seeing with what zeal and fervor the religious atoned for his fault. In consequence he was more devoted than ever to the friars, offering himself and all his goods to serve the order.

CHAPTER XII

Of the Good Grace and Good Words with Which an Office of Charity Should Be Exercised

THE blessed St. Basil, in a sermon exhorting to monastic life, gives an admonition and instruction very good for those who are occupied in outward offices of char-

ity, how they should behave in exercising them. When you have, he says, to do these offices, you must not be content with the mere bodily exertion, but you must take care to do what you do with a good grace and show mildness and gentleness in your words, that the others may understand that you do this out of charity, and so your service may be pleasing to them. And the same says Ecclesiasticus: *Son, in thy good deeds give no motive of complaint, nor in thy gifts cause sadness by evil words. Shall not a fall of dew temper heat? So too is the word better than the gift. Seest thou not that a good word is worth more than the thing given?* (Ecclus. xviii. 15). This is the salt which St. Paul says must give a relish to all that you do. The gracious air with which you serve and the kind terms in which you answer are worth more than all that you do. And, contrariwise, know that however much you labor and fatigue yourself, if you do not do it with a good mien, using kind words and answers, it will not be valued or go for anything, but will seem all lost. *Let your words and answers, say the Apostle, always be seasoned with the salt of graciousness and gentleness* (Col. iv. 6), with such phrases as "Delighted," "Most willingly." Even if you are busy and have a great deal to do and cannot do what you are asked, do not on that account return your brother a dry and disagreeable answer; even then you must see that your answer be so good that the other may go away as contented and happy as if you had done the thing, in view of your kindness. Say such things as this: "Certainly I should be much pleased to do it if I could, but just now I can't. Will it do afterwards?" And if the obstacle is that you have not leave, say: "I will go and ask leave for it." Make up in good words for what you cannot do in deed; thus your good will is understood. This is also what Solomon says: *A gracious tongue aboundeth in a good man* (Ecclus. vi. 5). Words spoken with graciousness and breathing tenderness and love must always abound in a good and virtuous man,

that being a great means to the preservation of charity and mutual union.

St. Bonaventure says that we ought to be ashamed to utter a harsh and disagreeable word that could possibly offend or displease our neighbor, even though it be spoken offhand and on the spur of the moment, and though the word in itself be very slight. And if at any time it shall happen that we are off our guard in this particular, we should be careful to confound and humble ourselves and offer satisfaction to our brother by begging his pardon.

It is related of St. Dositheus that when he was infirmarian he took particular care not to run foul of anyone, but to speak to all very peacefully and charitably. Still it did happen sometimes that, having to deal with so many persons—now with the cook, as to whether that pot should be put in this place; at other times with the dispenser, because he did not give him the better portion for the sick, or because he did not give it him at once; at other times with the refectorian, because he took away some things from the refectory—he raised his voice, and spoke some rough and offensive word; and when this happened, he was so ashamed of himself that he went to his cell and, prostrate on the ground, had his fill of weeping, until St. Dorotheus, his master, went there, who understood the situation. “What’s this, Dositheus? What have you been doing?” He at once told his fault with many tears: “Father, I have spoken disdainfully to my brother.” St. Dorotheus scolded him well. “Is this humility? Are you still alive?” After scolding him, he said: “Rise now, God has forgiven you; let us start afresh.” And the story goes that he got up as cheerfully as if he had heard his pardon from the mouth of God, and made a new resolution never to speak to anyone disagreeably and harsh.

For the common profit of those who do services of charity as also of those who receive them, St. Basil gives two short and solid pieces of advice. How, he asks, shall we

render well this service of charity to our brothers? And he answers: If we reckon that in serving our brother we are serving Christ, Who said: *Verily I say to you, that what ye have done to the least of my brethren, ye have done it to me* (Matt. xxv. 40). Do things as one serving God and not men, and in that way you will do them well, in good style and with a good grace. He goes on to ask: And how am I to receive the service that my brother does me? He answers: As when the master serves his servant—*velut servus ab hero*; and as St. Peter behaved when the Lord offered to wash his feet: *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* (John xiii. 6). Thus there is preserved on the one hand humility in both parties concerned, inasmuch as the one will not disdain nor be weary of the service he renders to his brother, regarding him as a son of God and brother of Christ and reckoning that in serving him he serves Christ Himself; and the other will not flatter himself upon seeing all people at his service, but rather will be confounded and humble himself more at that, considering that it is not done for him but for God. And on the other hand mutual charity will be preserved and much augmented for the same reason.

CHAPTER XIII

Of What We Are to Do When We Have Had Any Passage of Arms or Disagreement with Our Brother

BUT since, after all, we are men, and not all of us always so much upon the alert but that one may be taken some day by surprise to the extent of saying a harsh or disagreeable word or giving some occasion of offense to his brothers, it will be well to see how we are to behave after that. When that happens, we are not to answer in the same harsh and disagreeable tone, but should have in us virtue and humility enough to take the thing well and know how

to dissemble it. The fire of our charity should not burn so low that a few drops of water will extinguish it. For this reason it is, says St. Basil, that St. Paul calls it *fraternal charity*, to signify that it must not be a light and accidental love, but well-marked and strong. *Let fraternal charity last ever between you* (Heb. xiii. 1), *loving one another as brethren* (Rom. xii. 10). It were greatly to be desired that none should ever give occasion to his brother, either in deed or word, for the least displeasure in the world; but it is also to be desired that none should be so brittle as glass, such a tender babe in virtue, as for a mere nothing to be put out and talk loud and break the peace. It were better that none should find fault with anyone, nor meddle in the office of another; but when it does happen that someone breaks the law in this, it is not reasonable and proper that the other party should at once throw this in his face, asking if he has got leave, or saying that there is a rule that none should meddle in the office of another; that only serves to make something of what was nothing, if you had only kept quiet and taken no notice. When one hard body strikes another hard body, it sounds and makes a noise; but if the hard body strikes a soft one, it is neither heard nor felt. We see that a hard ball discharged from a culverin shatters a tower of very good masonry with a great crash, but striking on sacks of wool its force is deadened by that soft material. So Solomon says on this subject: *A soft answer turneth away wrath, but hard words awaken fury* (Prov. xv. 1), for that is throwing fuel on the fire, contrary to what the Wise Man advises: *Throw not fuel on the fire of a man in a violent passion* (Ecclus. viii. 4). You should not feed his fire with your replies, but have so much softness and virtue in your composition that, though at times they say a hard and rough word to you, it makes no noise, it is not felt, it nowhere appears, but is deadened and drowned where it fell.

St. Dorotheus teaches us a very humble way of answering on such occasions. He says that, when others speak roughly and reprehend us and even accuse us of having done what we have not done, we should still answer with humility, asking pardon as if we had really given occasion for the rebuke, though we have given none, and say: "Pardone me, brother, and pray to God for me." He got this from one of those ancient Fathers, who advised him so. With this store of supplies on board, on the one side being very careful not to offend or give any occasion of displeasure to our brothers, and on the other being wide-awake for occasions of suffering and taking in good part any annoyance that may be offered us, we shall live in great peace and union.

But when some day you fail in this, and it happens that you have had a passage of arms with your brother because he has broken out and you have not had virtue and humility enough to bear it and take no notice, but one hard body has hit another and there has been a noisy collision, so that you remain offended and full of resentment against your brother and he also against you for the reply and retort with which you met him—then, says St. Bonaventure, this feeling of resentment must not be suffered to endure either on the one side or on the other; but you must seek to make it up and be reconciled to your brother before dinner or at least before going to bed. *Let not the sun go down upon your anger* (Eph. iv. 26); put an end to it before nightfall. Now the way to satisfaction and reconciliation, he says, must be by the one's asking pardon of the other. And our Father gives us the same recommendation in his Constitutions. He says: "It must not be allowed to give place for any irritation or disagreement to exist amongst Ours; but if anything of the sort comes about through our weakness and the instigation of the enemy, who is ever seeking to fan and kindle the fire of discord amongst brethren, means must be taken that they return at once by due satisfaction

to their former brotherhood and kindness." And among other spiritual admonitions that are found in the manuscripts of our Father, there is one to this effect, that, when anything of this sort occurs, the parties should at once ask pardon of one another, and this is the due satisfaction that the Constitutions require. With this humility the breach of charity will be repaired, as St. Bernard well observes: *Sola humilitas est laesae caritatis reparatio*. We should all be very ready to ask pardon and to give it, according to the word of the Apostle: *Bearing with one another, and pardoning one another, if anyone hath matter of complaint against another* (Col. iii. 13). Nay, each one should try to get the start in this transaction and not wait for or allow the other to take away his crown therein—that none may take thy crown (Apoc. iii. 11)—for whoever is the first to make advances by humbling himself and going first to beg pardon, that one gains a great crown. Thus the senior in religion, and he who has or ought to have a better hold on virtue and mortification, should aim at being the first in this transaction and abate his right and not stand on points, as to whether he has been the injured party or most in the right. When the shepherds of Abraham and Lot, his nephew, quarreled about the feeding-ground of their flocks, at once Abraham yielded his right and gave Lot the choice. *I pray thee, let there be no disagreement between me and thee, and between my shepherds and thine, since we are brothers. Here thou hast all the land in sight: go apart from me, I pray thee. If thou takest the left, I will take the right. If thou choosest the right, I will go to the left* (Gen. xiii. 8-9).

In the chronicles of the Cistercian Order there is a story of a monk who, every time he communicated, had this favor done him by the Lord, that it seemed as though he were receiving a honeycomb, and this delightful sweetness lasted three days. It happened one day that he rebuked another and went a little beyond bounds in doing so, and

then he went to communion without being reconciled to his brother. That day, the story says, he felt in his mouth a bitterness greater than that of gall because he had not complied with what Christ our Redeemer commands in His Gospel: *If thou art offering thine offering at the altar, and there thou rememberest that thy brother hath some complaint against thee, leave thine offering at the foot of the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and, that done, thou canst return and offer thy gift* (Matt. v. 23-24). Hereby we see what store the Lord sets by one's being reconciled with one's brother at once, since, though he be at the foot of the altar, He requires him to go back and be reconciled to him before making his offering to God.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Three Directions to Be Observed When Another Has Given Us Some Occasion of Annoyance

FROM what has been said, we may gather three directions to be observed when our brother has offended us or given us some occasion of annoyance. The first is that we must be very far from desiring any revenge. We are all brethren and members of the same body, and no member wounded by another member takes vengeance on it, nor was ever boy so senseless as, because he had bitten his tongue, to pull out in his vexation the teeth that did the mischief. They are of the same household; now that one harm has been done, let not there be done two. Thus we should say, when a neighbor offends us: "He is of my body; let us pardon him; let us not do or wish him any evil: now that one harm is done, let there not be two in this body of religion." *Rendering no man evil for evil* (Rom. xii. 17). I am not speaking of revenge in a grave matter, for here in religion we are very far, and all should be very far, from that; but I speak of lighter things such as one

thinks he may desire and do without sin. One will say: "I do not wish any harm to befall my brother, but certainly I should like to say to him two words that he would feel and come to see the mischief he has done in this matter." Another is glad at the rebuke and penance given to him with whom he has some matter of animosity. Another feels a strange satisfaction and complacency in the man's not succeeding well in some undertaking and coming out of it disappointed and humbled. This is revenge; this is an evil thing; this is not having forgiven with all your heart. In this state of mind one may well have some scruple over the words of the Paternoster: *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.* In some sort this would mean more amongst us in religion than in those of the world desiring a grave vengeance on their enemies. *Say not: As he hath done unto me, so will I do unto him* (Prov. xxiv. 29). Desire not for your brother a return of what he has done to you, since that would be to desire vengeance.

Secondly, we must not only be far from desiring any sort of vengeance upon him who has offended us, but we must also beware of another thing which people in the world think lawful. Those in the world are wont to say: "I wish no evil to Jones, but I shall never be able to stomach him any more." These people keep up in their heart a dislike and aversion for him who has injured them, and they cannot swallow any more from that quarter, as they say. We consider such action in these worldly people to be wicked, and we sometimes doubt whether they have fulfilled in rigor the obligation of the precept, since this sometimes leads to their refusing to speak to the person, and giving some scandal thereby. But how much greater a fault would it be if here amongst us there were anything of the sort, and there remained in your heart any bitterness or dislike against your brother and you did not look upon him *as yesterday and the day before* (Gen. xxxi. 2)! This

is a thing very alien to religious life. *Let all bitterness of heart, all anger and indignation be removed from you* (Eph. iv. 31). We ought to be very bountiful to one another, very merciful, and ready to forget injuries, and that altogether from the heart. Do you know how much "from the heart" means? St. Paul tells you: "As God pardons us"—*As the Lord hath condoned to you, so do ye also* (Col. iii. 13). See how much from the heart God pardons us when we repent and beg pardon of our sins! God keeps no ill-will nor grudge against us nor shows us a sour face, but makes us friends as before. He cherishes and loves us as if we had never offended Him, and throws not our sins in our teeth nor remembers them anymore: *I will not remember any more their sins and iniquities* (Ezech. xviii. 22). *He will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins* (Micheas vii. 19). In this way we ought to forgive and in this way to forget injuries. There should remain in us no aversion or grudge against our brother, but it should be as though he had never offended us and nothing had passed between us. If you wish God to forgive you in this way, do you also forgive your brother; otherwise, take heed and be afraid, lest you become like that servant who had no compassion for his fellow servant, and whom his master delivered over to the sword of justice. *So shall my heavenly Father do to you as ye have done to your brother, unless you forgive everyone his brother from his heart* (Matt. xviii. 35). *Forgive and ye shall be forgiven: with the same measure wherewith ye have measured out to others, so shall it be measured unto you* (Luke vi. 37-38).

The third thing, which better explains what has gone before, St. Basil says, is that, as we should not keep up any particular affection for anybody, since these affections give rise to many bad consequences, as we shall say hereafter, so neither should we keep up an aversion for anyone, since these aversions also give rise to many bad consequences. What worse consequence could there be than this, if (which

God forbid) such language were heard amongst us: "Raphael does not get on well with Gabriel; since so-and-so happened, they have not been on the same footing as before; they do not hit it off with one another; they are at loggerheads." Encounters of this sort are enough to bring religious life to the ground. If Christ our Redeemer willed us to be known for His disciples by our loving one another (John xiii. 35), and it is not so with us, but quite the contrary, there will be there no disciple of Christ, no good religious.

Now for a remedy to all this. As when you feel a particular affection for anyone, you should diligently endeavor to cast it off, that it may not take root in your heart nor become dominant there—and the masters of spiritual life particularly advise us that it is necessary then to make great account of not letting this particular affection and inclination of the will come to light nor show itself in deeds nor let it be possibly understood or seen by anyone, because such a thing is apt to give great scandal and offense—so also, when you feel an aversion and dislike for anyone, you must be careful at once with all diligence to throw it off, that it may take no hold upon your heart nor any root there. And you must be particularly careful not to let it be in any manner visible in your actions that you have this aversion or temptation, for that might give great offence and lead to many evil consequences.

And not only must you be careful that others may not come to see it, but also that the party concerned may not be able to see it either. This is readily understood by the very example that we have before us. There are some people who endeavor that others should not come to see the particular affection they bear to some individual, wishing to avoid the censure and scandal that might occasion; but as for the person to whom they bear that affection, they give him to understand it in many things; sometimes by declaring it openly, at other times covertly, which is a great

and very pernicious evil. So there are those who, while they are careful that others shall not come to see how ill-disposed they are towards their brother, for the sake of avoiding the censure and scandal that might arise therefrom, nevertheless show it to him in outward appearance and behavior, cutting him and not treating him as before, looking glum and severe on every occasion of meeting him and purposely letting him see that they resent what he has done. This also is very wicked, since it is a kind of vengeance taken upon one's brother. Of all these things we should very much beware.

For this as for any other temptation the saints advise us by reason of the danger to walk with great precaution and circumspection, that the temptation may not run away with us and make us do something in accordance with it. Therefore, when you feel any aversion or dislike or rancor against another, you must be very much on your guard not to let this aversion or dislike carry you off and cause you to say something or do something in evidence of it and so give occasion of offence to your brother. Rather you should then make an effort to do him good turns, praying to God for him and speaking well of him and aiding him upon occasions, according to the counsel of the Gospel (Matt v. 44), and what St. Paul says: *Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good; for, doing this, thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head* (Rom. xii. 20-21).

Thomas à Kempis tells of a priest and servant of God, a companion of his in the same monastery, that, having to go on business to another convent, he met on the way a layman, with whom he engaged in familiar conversation. They came to speak of the things of God, and in the course of this conversation the layman went on to tell him that he wished to tell him a certain thing had happened to him at another time, which was that for a long time when he heard mass he could never see the Blessed Sacrament in the hands of the priest. Thinking that this was because he was too

far off and his sight too weak to be able to see it, he went up to the altar where the priest was celebrating, and for all that he could see no more in one place than in the other, and this lasted for more than a year. In his perplexity and confusion, not knowing the cause of it, he bethought himself and determined to lay open the matter in confession to a good priest. This priest after discreet examination found that this man was at enmity with a neighbor for a certain injury that he had received, which he had no mind on any account to forgive. The good confessor, considering his malice and hardness of heart, partly scolded him, partly admonished him, giving him to understand the great danger in which he lay; and that, if he did not from his heart pardon the injuries done him, it was in vain for him to ask pardon for his own sins, and that this was the reason why he could not see the Blessed Sacrament. Hearing this, he was struck with compunction of heart and, obeying the counsel of his good confessor, he pardoned his enemy. When the confession was over and he had received penance and absolution, he entered the church, heard mass, and without difficulty saw the Blessed Sacrament. In thanksgiving he was never wearied with blessing the Lord for this benefit and for the others that He marvelously works among His creatures.

CHAPTER XV

Of Rash Judgments, Explaining in What Their Malice and Gravity Consists

AND thou, says St. Paul, *how dardest thou judge thy brother, and despise him and undervalue him in thy heart?* (Rom. xiv. 10). Among other temptations where-with the devil, the enemy of our good, is wont to make war upon us, one of the chief is by intruding upon us judgments and suspicions against our brethren to the end that we may give up the esteem and good opinion that we have of them

and along with it our love and charity for them, or at least that that charity may become lukewarm and cool down. For the same reason we should do our best very diligently to resist this temptation, and reckon it a very grave one; for it strikes a chord coming so close home to us as does charity. So St. Augustine advises us: "If you wish to maintain yourself in love and charity with your brethren, before all things it is necessary to be greatly on your guard against judgments and suspicions, which are the poison of charity." St. Bonaventure says: "A pestilence hidden and secret, which drives away God and destroys charity among brethren." The malice and gravity of this vice consists in its defaming your neighbor in your own thoughts, depreciating and making less of him, giving him an unjustly low place in your heart, and that on indications slight and insufficient. Herein you aggrieve and wrong your brother; and the fault will be the greater, the more serious the matter on which you pronounce judgment and the more frivolous the evidence. The gravity of this fault will be understood from another like it. If you were to ruin another in the good estimation of your brother, defaming him and depriving him of the esteem and good opinion which your brother had of him, that would be clearly a grave sin. But this same offence and injury you do him in abandoning without cause and without sufficient evidence the esteem and good opinion that you had of him, for your brother sets the same value in having a good name with you as with another man. Hereby one may well see the injury and offence done in this fashion to your neighbor. Would not you take it ill that another should conceive such a mean opinion of you without your having given any sufficient cause for it? Measure him by yourself, which is the measure of charity with our neighbor, and of justice also.

It is to be observed here that it is one thing to have a temptation to form rash judgments and another thing to be overcome by that temptation. So we are wont to say

in other temptations, that it is one thing to have temptations to impurity and another thing to be overcome and consent to them; and we say that the evil is not in the first, but in the second of these two things. In this case, likewise, it is not wicked to be troubled with thoughts of rash judgment—though it would be better if we were so full of love and charity for our brethren, and had such a high opinion of them and such a deep knowledge of our own faults that it never entered into our heads to look at or consider the faults of other people. But after all, as St. Bernard says, “the fault is not in the feeling, but in the consent” and in being overcome by the temptation. *Non nocet sensus, ubi non est consensus*. A man is then overcome by the temptation to rash judgment when he makes up his mind and consents thereto and thereby loses the high opinion and good repute that he had of his brother and thinks less of him. In such a case, when he goes to confession, he must not say that there occurred to him judgments against his brother, but that he consented to them and was overcome by that temptation.

Theologians here warn us that we must be very careful not to specify to anyone else the judgment and suspicion that has occurred to us against our neighbors, lest the person we tell it to comes also himself to have the same judgment and suspicion, or possibly be confirmed in the idea that had already occurred to him; for our inclination is so evil that we are readier to believe evil than good of another. Even in confession, they observe that we must not name the person against whom the judgment has occurred nor the person at whom offence is taken for such and such a thing that he has done, not thereby to engender in the mind of the confessor any evil suspicion or disesteem of him. So great is the caution and care which they require us to have concerning the honor and good repute of our neighbor. And are you ready on slight and ill-founded conclusions to surrender the esteem and reputation which your

neighbor had with you, a reputation to which he has a natural right with all men, so long as his deeds do not bear direct witness to the contrary?

Besides the injury and offence hereby done to your neighbor, this vice contains in itself other malice and grave injury to God, by usurpation of the jurisdiction and judgment which properly belong to God. Against this our Savior says in the Gospel: *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned* (Luke vi. 37). St. Augustine says that He here forbids rash judgments, which consist in judging the intention of the heart and other things uncertain and hidden, because God has reserved to Himself the cognizance of this case and so forbids us to meddle therein. The Apostle St. Paul declares this more in particular when writing to the Romans: *Who art thou that darest judge another man's servant? In view of his master he standeth on his feet or falleth* (Rom xiv. 4). To judge is the act of a superior. This man is not your subject: he has a Master; namely, our Lord; leave him to Him to judge and take not on yourself the jurisdiction of God. *Judge not before the time until the Lord cometh, who will light up the hidden things of darkness and manifest the intentions of hearts; and then shall every man have his praise from God* (I Cor. iv. 5). This is the reason which the Apostle gives why we should not judge, because there are uncertain and hidden things which belong to the judgment of God, and so he who meddles in judging these things usurps the jurisdiction and judgment of God. In the Lives of the Fathers there is a story told of one of those monks, who, upon sundry indications that he saw or heard spoken of, judged ill of another monk; and immediately he heard a voice from heaven that said to him: "Men have taken away My judgment, and meddled in the jurisdiction of another."

And if we say this, and the saints say it, of things that wear some appearance of evil, what shall be said of those who put a bad construction even on things in themselves good, judging that they are done with an evil intention and for human motives? This is most properly to usurp the jurisdiction and judgment of God, these people seeking to enter even into the hearts of men and judge of intentions and hidden thoughts, a thing peculiarly proper to God. *Ye have made yourselves judges, giving unjust sentences*, says the Apostle St. James (ii. 4). And the Wise Man says that they seek to make themselves diviners, judging what they know not and cannot know. *In the likeness of a diviner and conjecturer he judgeth of what he knoweth not* (Prov. xxiii. 7).

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Causes and Roots Whence Rash Judgments Proceed, and Their Remedies

THE first root whence rash judgments proceed is that which is the root of all evils and sins, which is pride, but particularly so in this case. St. Bonaventure notes here a thing worthy of consideration. He says: "People who take themselves to be spiritual men are usually more tempted than others in this particular of judging and marking down others, as if they were so to fulfil what the Apostle says in another sense: *The spiritual man judgeth all things* (I Cor. ii. 15)." They fancy they see in themselves gifts of God, and whereas they ought to be more humble, they grow vain of them and take themselves for somebodies, and in comparison with themselves they make little of others, seeing them less recollected and more occupied and diverted with exterior things. Hence they turn reformers of other people's lives, forgetting their own.

The saints say that simplicity is the daughter of humility, since he who is truly humble keeps his eyes open only

upon his own faults and closed upon those of his neighbor, and ever finds in himself so much to consider and deplore as never to raise his eyes or his thoughts to the study of other people's faults; and thus once a man is truly humble, he will be far removed from these judgments. To this end the saints assign this remedy as very important, as well for this as for other failings, that we should keep our eyes open solely to see our own faults, *ut sciam quid desit mihi* (Psalm xxxviii. 5), and closed against the sight of the faults of our neighbors. Thus we shall not be like hypocrites whom Christ censures in the holy Gospel, who *see the mote in the eyes of their neighbor, and not the beam that they have right across their own eyes* (Matt. vii. 3). The keeping of our eyes ever on our own failings carries with it great and high benefits. It carries humility and self-abasement; it carries fear of God and recollection of heart; it carries peace and tranquillity. But to go prying into your neighbor's defects carries with it great evils and ill consequences, such as pride, rash judgments, indignation against my brother and ill opinion of him, troubles of conscience, fits of indiscreet zeal, and other things that disturb the heart. Thus, if ever you do see some defect in your neighbor, the saints bid you draw fruit from it. An excellent way of doing this is laid down for us by St. Bonaventure, who says: "When you see in your brother something that displeases you, before you judge him, turn your gaze within and see if there be in you anything worthy of reprehension; and if there be, turn your sentence against yourself and condemn yourself in that in which you were minded to condemn another, saying with the prophet: *It is I who have sinned, I who have done evil* (II Kings xxiv. 17). I am the evil and perverse creature, who do not deserve to kiss the ground on which the other treads, and do I dare to judge him? And what has that which I see in my brother to do with what I see in myself?" St. Bernard teaches another good rule, which we may adopt in this mat-

ter: "When you see anything in another that displeases you, turn your eyes at once upon yourself and see if you have the same fault; and if so, give it up. And when you see anything in your brother that pleases you, turn your eyes also upon yourself and see if you have that good point; and if you have it, take means to keep it; and if you have it not, take means to attain it." In this way we shall profit by everything.

St. Thomas assigns other reasons of these judgments. They come sometimes of an evil heart, whereby a man judges of others from what he has done or would do himself, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *The fool walking in the road, being himself void of sense, reckons all men to be fools* (Eccles. x. 3); which in plain English is what the proverb says: "The robber fancies all the world to be thieves." As when you look through a blue glass, all the world seems blue; and if you look through a pink glass, all seems pink; so to the evil and imperfect man everything seems evil; he sees all things in a bad light because he looks through a glass of the same hue. Because he does things for these ends and on these motives, he thinks that everybody else does the same. To him well applies that saying of St. Paul: *You condemn yourself in these judgments, because you do that very thing which you judge* (Rom. ii. 1). A good and virtuous man always takes things on the better side, even though there be some indications that make the thing doubtful; to take them on the worse side is not a good sign. St. Dorotheus says that as a man with a good constitution and a good stomach turns into good nourishment even inferior food, and, contrariwise, a man with a bad constitution and a bad stomach turns good food into peccant humor, so also herein—a man who has a good and upright heart and aims at virtue turns everything to good, takes everything on the better side; whereas he who does not aim at virtue turns all into peccant humor, taking things on the worse side.

The saints go further and say that even when what one sees is clearly bad, though it is not sin to judge that for evil which certainly is so, yet then virtue and perfection show themselves in efforts made to excuse one's neighbor as far as possible. "If you cannot excuse the deed, excuse the intention," says St. Bernard; "think that it was some piece of inadvertence or ignorance; think that it must have been natural forgetfulness; think that it was some sudden burst of impulse"—*Excusa intentionem, si opus non potes; puta ignorantiam, puta subreptionem, puta casum*. If we loved our neighbor as we love ourselves, if we regarded him as a second self, since a friend is a second self, there would never be wanting to us modes and manners of excuse. Oh, how a man excuses himself! How he defends himself! How he diminishes and lightens his faults! So should we do to our neighbor if we loved him as we love ourselves. And when the fault is so evident and culpable as to leave no room for excuse, then, says St. Bernard, think that the occasion and temptation was very grave and vehement, and say within your heart: "What would have become of me if that temptation had assailed me with as much force as it assailed him, and the devil, the tempter, had as much power to tempt me as he had to tempt him?" We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that, when a deed was so evidently bad as to leave no room for excuse and there was no other way out of it, he suspended his judgment and laid hold of a text of Scripture and said: *Judge not before the time* (I Cor. iv. 5); and that saying of the Lord to Samuel: *God alone it is that seeth hearts* (I Kings xvi. 17); and that of St. Paul: *In the eye of the Lord every man keepeth his footing or falleth* (Rom. xiv. 4).

St. Thomas mentions another main root of this habit. He says that rash judgments often arise from some aversion or envy or rivalry on the part of him who judges; this strongly inclines him to think ill of all the doings of the person judged and view them in the worst light on very

slight indications, for everyone readily believes what he desires. This is seen by the contrary, for when one has great love for another, he sees at once all his doings in a good light and is so far from putting a bad construction on them or taking them in ill part that he rather excuses and makes light of them, even when he sees them not such as he would wish. *Charity thinketh no evil* (I Cor. xiii. 5). One and the same fault and one and the same evidence, how different they appear in one whom you love and one for whom you have an aversion! Every day we experience this, that one man's goings on shock us, while another perhaps goes further, and we are not offended nor take any heed of it. Both the one and the other fact is well stated by the Wise Man: *Hatred raiseth up quarrels, but love on the contrary covereth all up and putteth faults out of sight* (Prov. x. 12). Thus the passing of judgment on others is for want of loving them. Hence also it is that even what is no fault in our brother oftentimes offends us—his demeanor, his conversation, his way of going on, and sometimes even what in him is virtue. Hence it follows that, as simplicity is a great help to the preservation of charity, so also charity is a great help to simplicity; those two virtues go hand in hand like good sisters.

It will also help us much to consider attentively the cunning and malice of the devil, who seeks to rob us of the esteem and consequently of the love that we should bear to our brethren by little trifles that sometimes are not faults, or if they are, are so trivial that men cannot be free from faults of that sort, since in this life there is no man who does not commit faults and venial sins. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John says: *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and speak not the truth* (I John i. 8). And the Wise Man says: *Seven times shall the just man fall* (Prov. xxiv. 16); he means to say, he shall fall many times and not cease to be just on that account. Now it is not fair that anyone should lose your good will for that

for which he ceases not to be just, nor forfeits one point of the grace of God. True love of charity is not so strait pinned up, not such a house on sticks, as are the friendships of this world, which are dissolved by any trumpery accident, even by failure to pay a salute to your friend. The love of charity is founded in God, Who cannot fail. Let us, then, copy the tender ways of God, Who ceases not to cherish and love us, full of faults and imperfections and venial sins as we are; not for that does He diminish one point of His love. God suffers in me so many faults and imperfections, and I cannot suffer one small fault in my brother without at once throwing it in his teeth and showing annoyance and remaining embittered and in ill humor against him! You show therein that your love is not pure love of charity for God's sake; for if it were, what does not make God angry would not make you angry nor raise your displeasure. What does not make God angry ought not in all reason to make His servants and creatures angry. This man you are angry with is a child of God, His much cherished and well-beloved child; now if God loves and esteems him, it is reasonable that you also should love and esteem him. *Dearly beloved, if God hath loved us so much, we ought also to love another* (I John iv. 11).

Add to this a doctrine of St. Gregory, and it is a common opinion of the saints; they say that sometimes God our Lord denies His lesser gifts to those to whom He gives great gifts and by a secret dispensation of His providence leaves them with sundry faults and imperfections. This to the end that, seeing how for all their desires and efforts to rid themselves of an evil way and an unhappy propensity that they have about them they never succeed, but with so many good purposes they still fail in this point, they may walk ever in humility and self-abasement and understand that, as they cannot compass these lesser things, still less can they achieve those greater things of themselves. Thus a person may in one way be very per-

fect, very virtuous, a saint; and yet on the other hand along with that have sundry faults and imperfections which God has left to try him and to keep him in humility in the midst of the gifts that he enjoys. Hence we should draw this conclusion, apt to our purpose, that we ought not to pass an unfavorable judgment on anyone for his having some of these faults, nor esteem or prefer ourselves before him because we think we have not such faults. Remember what St. Gregory says, that this man with this fault may be perfect, and you without it may be imperfect. In this manner you will guard humility in yourself on the one hand, and on the other hand esteem and love of your brother and will not judge him nor hold him in less regard on that account.

CHAPTER XVII

In Which the Above Is Confirmed by Sundry Examples

IN the lives of the Fathers it is told of the Abbot Isaac that he came one day from the solitude in which he lived to a company of monks and judged ill of one of them, thinking him worthy of punishment because he saw in him some signs of small virtue. Afterwards he returned to his cell and found at the door an angel standing, who barred his entrance; and when the holy man asked the reason, the angel answered that the Lord had sent him for an answer, where he wished or commanded them to cast this monk whom he had judged and condemned. Then the abbot recognized his fault and begged pardon of the Lord. The angel told him that the Lord forgave him that once, and bade him for the future greatly beware of playing the judge or passing sentence on anyone before the Lord, the Judge of all, judged him.

St. Gregory relates of Cassius, Bishop of Narnia, a great servant of God, that his nose was naturally very red and

fiery. Totila, King of the Goths, seeing it, judged that it came of his being a great toper. But the Lord was careful to strike in at once for the honor of His servant by permitting the devil to enter of a sudden into one of Totila's courtiers, his sword bearer, and torment him in the sight of the king and of all the army. They took the possessed person to the saint and he, praying and making the sign of the cross over him, delivered him at once from the devil, whereat the king changed his judgment and held him in great honor ever after.

In the lives of the Fathers it is related that there were two monks, very holy and brotherly together, on whom the Lord had bestowed this favor, that each saw in the other the grace of God that dwelt in him by some visible sign—what it was the history does not say. One of them went out one Friday morning from his cell and saw a monk eating; and as soon as he saw him, without further examination of the necessity or cause he had for eating so early, said to him: "How comes it that you are eating at this hour, today being Friday?"—taking that to be a fault in the other. When he returned to his cell, the monk, his companion, was greatly afflicted, not seeing in him the customary sign of the grace of God, and said to him: "Brother, what is that thou hast done since thou wentest out?" And he answered that he did not know he had done anything bad. His companion answered: "Perhaps thou hast spoken some idle word." At once he remembered what he had said and the judgment he had passed on the other monk. He told him what had passed and they both fasted a fortnight in penance for this fault. When that was over, he saw the sign as usual.

In the chronicles of St. Francis there is related a marvelous vision that the Lord showed to Brother Leo, one of the companions of St. Francis. He saw a great number of Friars Minor in procession, very shining and fair, among whom he saw one more glorious, from whose eyes flashed

rays brighter than those of the sun; so bright and fair they were that he could not look him in the face. Holy Brother Leo asked who this friar was whose eyes shone so bright, and was answered that it was Brother Bernard de Quintaval, first companion of St. Francis, and that the light shone from his eyes so brilliant because he always judged on the more favorable side whatever he saw in others, and took all others to be better than himself. When he saw the poor in their rags he used to say: "These people observe poverty better than you," and judged them as if they had voluntarily promised and chosen that poverty. When he saw the rich and well-dressed, he used to say with much compunction: "Maybe these wear haircloth under their clothes and secretly chastise their flesh and outwardly dress in this manner to shun vainglory, and so it may be that they are better than you." For this simplicity in his eyes the Lord gave him that particular glory in them. This is the example we should copy. St. Dorotheus says: "When you enter another's cell and see it all in disorder, say in your heart: 'O happy and blessed brother, who art so absorbed in God as not to see these things!' And when you see it well-arranged and tidy, say: 'That is the way he keeps his soul.'"

In the same chronicles it is related how, when St. Francis was going about Italy preaching, he found on the road a poor and very infirm man, on whom he took pity and compassion, and began to talk to his companion in words expressive of his compassion for the infirmity and poverty of this poor man; and his companion said to him: "Brother, it is true that this person looks very poor but maybe he is richer in desire than all that there are in the land." St. Francis scolded him at once very severely for this speech and rash judgment, and said to him: "Brother, if you wish to stay in my company, you must do the penance I shall give you for this sin against your neighbor." The brother submitting himself with great humility and

acknowledgment, ready to do any penance, St. Francis commanded him to cast himself naked at the poor man's feet, and confess that he had sinned against him by detraction, and beg his pardon and prayers. His companion entirely accomplished on the spot the penance laid upon him.

We read also in another place of the same chronicles that the same saint, having for a time almost quite lost his sight by profuse and continual weeping, went to look for Brother Bernard to find comfort in conversing with him of God, of which he had special gift, so that they often spent the whole night together talking of spiritual things and heaven. When he came to his cell, which was in a remote part of the mountain, Brother Bernard was wrapt in prayer; and the holy man Francis called from hard by his cell, saying: "Brother Bernard, come to talk to this blind man." But he, all entranced as he was in God, heard nothing and made no answer to the saint. After a little interval he repeated his call once more: "Brother dear, Friar Bernard, come to console this poor blind man." As Friar Bernard did not answer him, St. Francis turned away, very sad and murmuring within himself that Brother Bernard, though called many times, had not taken the trouble to answer. The saint thus went his way, lamenting on the road and abashed. Then he went apart from his companion, and put himself in prayer on this doubt, how it was that Brother Bernard would not answer him, and at once heard God's reply, Who reprov'd him and said to him: "Why art thou troubled, little man? Can it possibly be reasonable that a man should leave God for a creature? Brother Bernard, when thou didst call, was with Me and not by himself, and therefore could not come to thee nor answer thee a word because he did not hear thee." The holy father at once returned to Brother Bernard in a great flutter, to accuse himself and receive from him penance for this thought; and finding that he had got up from his

prayer, he threw himself at his feet, telling his fault and relating the rebuke which the Lord had given him, and bade Brother Bernard under obedience to inflict on him the penance which he should command him to inflict. But Brother Bernard, suspecting that the saint would command something extreme in the way of humility, as he was wont to do in contempt and chastisement of himself, sought means to excuse himself, and said: "I am ready, father, to do what you command provided you promise me on your part that you will do what I tell you." The holy father was content to agree to this, being readier to obey than to command. Then the saint said: "I command you under holy obedience that in punishment of my presumption, when I am lying my length upon the ground, you put your feet one on my breast and the other on my mouth, and thus step three times over me, treading on my breast and my mouth, saying the words that I deserve: 'Lie there on the ground, caitiff son of Peter Bernardon; whence came upon thee such pride, seeing thou art so base and vile?'" Brother Bernard, hearing this, was in doubt what to do; but for obedience sake, and not to distress the holy father, he did it with as much reverence as he could. That done, St. Francis said: "Now do you command what you wish under holy obedience." Said Brother Bernard: "Under holy obedience I command you that, whenever the two of us are together, you chide me very severely for my faults." Father St. Francis was much pained at this, for he held him in his great reverence for his holiness; and from that time forth the saint never stayed any long time with Brother Bernard, not to have occasion to scold so holy a soul; but when he went to see or hear him speak of God, he brought the interview shortly to a close.

Surius relates that one day the priest of the church came to visit the holy Abbot Arsenius, who was ill. He found him lying on a carpet, and at the head of the bed a pillow. There came with the priest an aged monk who, finding Arsenius

thus, began to take scandal, thinking that these were comfortable quarters enough for a man who they said was so holy, not knowing who Arsenius was. Then the priest, who was a sagacious man, took the aged monk a little apart and questioned him: "Pray tell me, father, what you were before you became a monk." He answered that he was very poor and had no property nor means of livelihood to speak of. Then the priest replied: "But know that Arsenius, before he was a monk, was a person very well off and in a high station, a tutor to princes, and gold rolled in his house; and for a man like that to have left all things and come to this poverty and humility, see whether there is not something to admire there and whether the carpet and pillow that he has is an excess of comfort for a man reared in such abundance and now aged and infirm." The old man stood abashed and convinced.

Cassian relates of the Abbot Machetes that, discoursing and teaching on this subject that we must not judge anyone, he told of himself that he had judged his monks particularly on three things. The first was that some monks had abscesses formed inside their mouths which gave them much pain, and to be rid of it they put themselves under treatment and had it lanced, which he judged to be a fault and a mark of want of mortification. The second was that some others, enfeebled somewhat by the rigors of the rough life they led, under necessity made use of a coverlet of goats' hair to lie upon and cover themselves withal, and he judged this to be an excess of comfort and a departure from the austerity that monks should practise. The third was that secular persons came and were moved by devotion to beg blessed oil of the monks, and they blessed and gave it them; and he thought this great presumption on their part, giving themselves out as though they were saints. He further acknowledged that in punishment for these blameworthy judgments, God had let him fall in all three particulars and that he had done the same thing which he

condemned in others. For first of all an abscess formed in his mouth, and, compelled by the great pain and torment it gave him, and the advice of his elders, he had put himself under treatment and got it lanced. And under stress of this same infirmity he made use of the aforesaid coverlet; and constrained by the earnest entreaties and importunity of secular persons, he had given them blessed oil. He concluded by admonishing all to take warning by his example, and to dread and carefully shun this vice, saying that they would come to fall into the same case on which they pronounced judgment, as had happened to himself.

Anastasius, Abbot of the Monastery of Mount Sina, who flourished at the time of the Sixth General Council, relates that there was in his monastery a monk who did not pay so much attention to the practices of the community, choir, disciplines, and the like, and was not taken to be such a good religious. The hour of his death came, and they found him in great joy. Anastasius reproved him: "How now, can a monk who has taken life so easily be so cheerful at this hour?" The monk replied: "Be not astonished, father; the Lord has sent me an angel to tell me that I am saved because I have accomplished His word: *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven* (Luke vi. 37). And though it is true that I have not been so faithful to the exercises of the community, partly through negligence, partly through my want of health, yet I suffered them to illtreat me and forgave them from my heart and judged them not, but rather excused what they did or said; for this I am full of joy."

CHAPTER XVIII

Of Other Manners of Union and Friendships Not Good

WE have treated of the union and love that is good and spiritual; now we shall proceed to treat of three manners there are of union and love, not good nor spiritual, but

evil and hurtful. St. Basil in his Monastic Constitutions says that religious ought to have great union and charity one with another, but in such sort that there be no particular friendships nor affections whereby two or three band themselves together to keep up such affections, for this would not be charity, but division and sedition, even though such friendship seemed just and holy. And in his fine sermon *De Institutionibus Monachorum*, going into this point more in detail, he says: "If there be anyone found to have more affection for one religious than for another, even if it be for his own brother according to the flesh, or on any other consideration, let him be punished as one wronging common charity." And he gives the reason there, and more expressly in the following sermon, how it is that herein he does an injury to the community; the reason being that he who loves one more than another shows clearly that he does not love the others perfectly, since he does not love them all as he does this one, and thus he offends the others and wrongs the whole community. And if to offend one individual is a matter so grave the Lord says it is to *touch the apple of His eye* (Zach. ii. 8), what shall it be to offend a whole community, and such a community? And so St. Basil then strongly charges religious in no manner to love some individuals more particularly than others nor have special dealings with some more than with others, so as not to aggrieve anyone *nor give offense to anyone* (II Cor. vi. 3), but to have a common and general love of charity of God, Who sends His sunshine and rain upon all equally (Matt. v. 45). The saint goes on to say that these particular friendships in religion are a great seed plot of envy and suspicion, and hatreds and enmities; and further cause divisions, private meetings, and cliques, which are the pest of religious life, for there one discovers his temptations, another his judgments, another his complaints, and other secret things that ought to be hushed up. There go on detractions and criticisms

of one another and sometimes of the superior. There people infect one another with their mutual faults in such sort that each catches the fault of the other in a few days. Finally, these friendships are the cause of much breaking of rules and of the doing of many things that ought not to be done, to suit one's friend, as they experience too well who form such friendships.

St. Ephrem says: "Familiarities and conversations of this sort do no little damage to the soul." Thus it is necessary that we should avoid and stand greatly on our guard against them and always hold this for a fundamental principle, that here in religion we must not have particular friends, intimacies, and exclusive dealings that may offend the community. Our friendship should be spiritual, not founded on flesh and blood, nor on long acquaintance and familiarity, nor on other human titles and foundations, but on God our Lord, Who embraces all. Thus there should be an equality of love with all, as with sons of God and brothers of Christ. Let us never in any way consent to our heart's being captivated by any creature; let it be the captive of God alone.

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis it is related of a holy man, Brother John of Lucca, that he withdrew from and greatly shunned familiar conversations; and one who was fond of and desired to profit by his conversation complained one day, asking why he was so shy and dry in treating with those who wished him well. The servant of God answered: "It is for your good I do it, since the more I am united with God, of the more profit shall I be to those who wish me well; whereas these your soothing friendships separate me in some degree from God and so do harm to you and me."

CHAPTER XIX

*Of the Second Manner of Friendships and Associations
That Are Not Good*

THERE is a second manner of particular friendship, different from the first inasmuch as it has a different end, but not less harmful to the community and to union and fraternal charity, nay, rather more: it is when one desiring advancement and influence and reputation unites and attaches himself to those whom he thinks likely to forward him thereto. Cassian says that severe bodily ailments develop little by little, and spiritual ailments and great evils of soul alike develop little by little. Let us, then, describe the gradual development of this particular malady, and along with it we will tell the ordinary way in which a religious student comes to deteriorate and go to ruin.

Such a one comes out of the noviceship having made good progress there by the grace of God, and entertaining a high esteem of spiritual things and much affection for them, as it is reasonable he should come out. He goes to the colleges, and there in the ardor of his studies he begins to fall off in his spiritual exercises and either leaves them out in part or does them by routine or for form's sake, without drawing fruit from them, which comes to the same thing. He goes on further, and as now on the one hand his spiritual aims are failing him because he does not do his spiritual duties as he ought, and on the other *knowledge puffs him up* (I Cor. viii. 1) and makes him vain, he comes little by little to set great store by genius and talents and lose his esteem of virtue and humility. This is the gate whereby ordinarily all the undoing and loss of students enters and commences, and thus much heed should be taken to prevent it. Steadily there decreases in them the appreciation and esteem of the quality of virtue, humil-

ity, mortification, and all that regards their advancement in spiritual things; while their admiration and esteem of the quality of learning and ability steadily increases because they fancy that thereby they are destined to thrive and come out strong men, regarded and esteemed. Thus they begin to fix their gaze upon this, and desire to be taken for men of fine genius and talent, and to that end they desire to come out well in disputations and the maintaining of theses; they solicit with much eagerness whatever may lead to that and seek occasions to shine and show off and perchance to cast others into the shade and undo them, that they may not get the start of them. Going on further, they begin to aim at ingratiating themselves with some master and grave Father and with all who they think can help and support them with superiors, and they strike up a friendship with them, all in order to mount up and win consideration and be regarded and esteemed, and that these authorities may be favorable to them in their progress.

This is one of the most harmful and pernicious things that can be found in religion and most contrary to union; for what greater evil can enter into religion than the entering in of ambition and self-seeking? And what greater pestilence could enter in here than to have language of this sort coming in amongst us, that now it is necessary for a man to look to himself and get others to back him; and that if he does not, he will be forgotten and thrust into a corner and no account made of him; and that that is how things go nowadays even here? God deliver us from such evil language, and much more from there being anyone found to begin to instill this poison into the heart now of one guileless man, now of another, who was ever so far removed from it, and open his eyes to his perdition. Very different from this is the truth which the Society professes. Our Father in the Tenth Part of his Constitutions says: "Let all who are of the Society give themselves to solid

and perfect virtues and to spiritual things, and make more account of them than of learning and other natural and human gifts." This is what the Society esteems and values; therefore let not the old serpent with his cunning and venom deceive you, persuading you that by breaking the commandments of your elders and eating of the forbidden fruit, *you shall become as gods* (Gen. iii. 5). Let him not make you believe that there you will grow and be honored and esteemed, for he lies, liar as he is, the fact being that you will come in for nothing but loss of character; whereas if you go by the other way of virtue, making always greater account of spiritual things and of what makes for your spiritual progress, in that way you will thrive and the Lord will lift you up both in the one and in the other. He will give you the virtue that you desire, and honor and esteem also; you will be regarded and esteemed before God and before men.

We have in confirmation of this a history very much to the purpose in the Third Book of Kings. Holy Scripture tells how God bade Solomon to ask whatever he would and He would give it to him. Solomon set his eyes on wisdom and asked it of God, and Scripture says: *God was so pleased that Solomon had set his eyes on wisdom that he said to him: Since thou hast asked me for this, and not for long life, nor riches, nor victories and vengeance on thine enemies, I give thee wisdom, and that in such sort that thou shalt be called the Wise, eminently so, since there hath not been before thee, nor shall be after thee, anyone the like* (III Kings iii. 10-12). And further, and this is what makes to our purpose, so greatly was God pleased with what Solomon had so happily resolved upon choosing and asking, that, not content with giving him the wisdom that he asked for and which was given him so abundantly, as has been said, He gave him also what he had not asked for; God gave him both the one and the other. *Since thou hast asked so fitly, I will give thee also what thou hast not asked*

for, riches and honor, and that in such abundance as never had any other King anything like it (III Kings iii. 13). So also will God deal with you if you do the right thing in choosing and setting before your eyes true wisdom, which consists in true and solid virtues. He will give you the virtue that you desire, on which you set your eyes, because that is very pleasing to God; and He will give you also the honor and esteem on which you did not set your eyes; God will give you both the one and the other. And so we see by experience that these are they who are regarded and esteemed both before God and before men. For we have God's word for it, that *he who humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11); and the more you humble yourself and give yourself to virtue, the more you shall be exalted and esteemed; and the more you fly from honor and esteem, the more it will persist in following you, as the shadow follows him who flies from it. But as for those other ambitious people who go like chamelons swallowing air to be swollen out and seem great, the more will honor fly from them; for where they think to mount up, they go down; and where they think to be regarded and esteemed, they lose caste. In fact they come to be taken for proud people, restless, and disturbers of religion; and so there is nothing needed but to cut them off from it as unsound and rotten members, that they may not infect others.

But to come back to our point I say that here in religion, as we ought to be very far from ambitions and pretensions, so also we ought to be far from forming those friendships which are directed thereto. We ought to be tied to nobody, nor should it be the word here: *I am of Paul, I of Apollo, I of Cephas* (I Cor. i. 12). I am not of this man or of that, but of my superior; with him I aim at being united and with no one else in particular. We have no need in the Society of patrons or supporters, nor of standing upon compliments, nor of forming a connection with anyone, for we are not office-hunters, nor have we come here on the

hunt for anything but our salvation. Be you a good religious and attend in earnest to the business on which you have come into religion, and you will have no need of anyone but God. This is he who has peace and comfort in religion: the others will never have it, as they themselves experience and confess. A religious should be ashamed to be taken for one who goes about looking for patrons, gaining good wills, and flattering perhaps with others that they may support him and shelter him, for this argues great imperfection and great weakness. The house that needs props is weak; it is in the way of falling: the tree that must be supported by stays is tender, not strong, not well rooted. So you, if you have to go about looking for stays and props, are tender, ill rooted in virtue and even in religion. This is the warning that our Father General Aquaviva gives particularly to students, and says that they must be in no way allowed to attach themselves to older Fathers nor have them for patrons; and he warns those same Fathers to beware of such patronage, and much more to beware of trying to get the young ones to make up to them and want to have them for a refuge, and again of making offers to young men to help them in all their needs, and still more of any senior's taking it for an honor and a badge of authority to have young men for clients and resenting their not applying to him, taking such reserve on their part for a proof that they undervalue him and make little account of him, and perhaps going so far as to tell some young man that he is very stiff and shows too much gravity. This is not showing too much gravity, but showing oneself a good religious, for this is religious life and the other thing is not, but a thing smacking much of the world and very worldly. And if anyone complains of you on that account, he will be complaining of your being virtuous, and like a good religious keeping so far apart from this familiarity, so redolent of the world and so contrary to religion. May the Lord grant that no other complaint may ever be made of us!

CHAPTER XX

Of a Third Sort of Union and Association Very Harmful to Religion

THE third sort of associations and particular friendships is worse and more contrary to union and fraternal charity than the preceding; it is when sundry individuals unite and ally themselves to alter the institute of a religious order and the established rule and holy enactments thereof. St. Bernard on the words of Canticles (i. 5), *The children of my mother have fought against me*, writes: "Not that the spouse, the Church, forgets what she has suffered from Gentiles, Jews, and persecutors, but this she more expressly laments and feels with peculiar keenness, I mean the war that is waged by enemies within our own house, a war far direr and more deadly than anything that foreign enemies can do." We may apply the same saying to a religious order, as a chief member of the Church. The children of my mother have fought against me, those whom I have reared, given them their studies and their degrees at so much cost and labor to myself; these arms that I gave them to fight against the world and convert souls to God, they have turned against me and with them make war upon their mother; see if this is not a grief to feel. Still, deplorable as it is, we ought not to be surprised at such a persecution. Blessed St. Francis experienced it in his days in his order; and the Catholic Church even in the lifetime of the apostles suffered this persecution at the hands of her own children, who rose up against her with the errors and heresies that they invented. The members follow in the wake of their Head, Who is Christ, Who traveled by this road of labors and persecutions, because thereby the elect are purified as gold in the crucible. So says St. Paul: *There must be factions and divisions, that those who are truly good may be made manifest among you* (I Cor. xi.

19) ; and Christ our Lord: *It needs must be that scandals come, nevertheless woe to that man by whom scandal cometh* (Matt. xviii. 7). Scandals in the Church, scandals in religion, for we are men. But that is no excuse; woe to him that causes the scandals; it were better for him if he had never been born.

The glorious St. Basil speaks gravely and severely against these combinations. "If any of their own accord cut themselves off from the rest of the community and seek to make a society within the Society, this is a vicious society and these are evil associations. It is a sedition and a division." A malicious machination it is in religion when people go about to alter and adulterate the established customs of their first institute, and all the worse the more they color it with pretence of improvement and reform. St. Basil says that such persons are first to be admonished and corrected in private and afterwards before others, according to the order laid down in the Gospel; and if they are none the more amended by that, *let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican* (Matt. xviii. 17). Such a one should be counted excommunicate and separated from the rest, like the sick of a contagious malady, that he may not infect the others. And our Father recommends the same in his Constitutions, according to the Apostle: *Would that they were cut off that trouble you* (Gal. v. 12). Cut off the rotten member that it may not infect the rest.

It is easy to see how great this evil is and how harmful to religious, since by the mere exposition of it, its poisonous nature is shown, and so it should not be necessary to take the trouble of opening it out further. But the matter of itself is so grave that we will here enlarge upon it and show cause sufficient for us not only to abhor, but to detest and abominate so great an evil, and remain rooted in attachment to our institute. Religious life is not an invention of men, but of God; and so the things laid down for the preservation and increase of a religious order must

not be taken for human inventions, as though they were the contrivance of some particular individual; they are the contrivances and inventions of God. As God took and chose the blessed St. Francis for the founder of his order, and the blessed St. Dominic for the founder of his, and our blessed Father Ignatius for the founder of the Society, and so of the rest; He gave them and showed them the means and so the particular manner of going about the work that was most suitable for the well-being and progress of the order, beyond what they could have discovered for themselves, because *God's works are perfect* (Deut. xxxii. 4), and in any other way this work of God would have remained mutilated and imperfect.

So in the Life of our Father, from an answer he gave, meeting something said by Father James Laynez, we may gather that the more substantial things of our institute—what we may call its sinews and foundations—were revealed and inspired by God our Lord to our blessed Father Ignatius. God Himself being author and source of this order, took Ignatius for its head and His principal instrument in the work of foundation. This may likewise be gathered from the method he is said to have observed in making and writing the Constitutions and the abundant prayers and tears which every word cost him of those words which he has left us in writing. Thus, to determine whether it was fitting or not that the churches of our professed houses should have any revenue for the upkeep of the fabric—a point which is not the most substantial of our institute—he said mass for forty consecutive days and gave himself to prayer with more fervor than usual. Hence we may see how much communication and consultation he had with God over the Constitutions, and the light that our Lord gave him to choose and determine that which would be most agreeable to His Divine Majesty. And that we may not seem to pitch our voice too high or to be crying our own wares—although the reason already given is

sufficient of itself—we have other testimony stronger than this (John v. 36), and it is well that we should allege it, for it is very important for us to be well grounded on this principle.

It is recounted in the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis that the saint retired with two companions to Mount Caynerio, near Reate, to compose and write his rule for presentation to the sovereign pontiff, so that he might obtain the apostolic bull of its confirmation, since hitherto it had not been confirmed by bull, but only by word of mouth, *vivae vocis oraculo*, by Innocent III. On that mountain he fasted forty days on bread and water, persevering day and night in continual prayer; so he composed his rule as the Lord inspired and revealed, as is said there and as actually was the case, as will appear presently. Taking the rule written on the mountain, he gave it to keep to Friar Elias, his vicar general, a prudent man according to the world and a learned man. Elias, seeing it founded on greater self-contempt, humility, and poverty than seemed to him expedient, lost the rule on purpose, that it might not be confirmed, but another more to his liking. Father St. Francis, who sought rather to follow the will of God than that of man and made small account of the opinions of the wise men of this world, returned to the mountain to keep another forty days' fast, and by fasting and prayer to ascertain the will of God and compose another rule. Friar Elias, knowing this, set himself about to thwart what was going on, and assembled some superiors and doctors among the friars and told them how Father St. Francis wanted to make a rule so strict that it was impossible to keep it. They required him as vicar general to go to St. Francis and tell him on the part of them all that they had no mind to be bound by this rule. Friar Elias did not dare to go alone with this message, but said that he would go with them. They all went to the mountain where the holy Father was praying in a lonely cell and, coming near it,

Friar Elias called for St. Francis. The saint, knowing his voice, came out of the cell and, seeing so many friars with him, asked what these friars wanted. Friar Elias answered: "They are superiors of the order, who, having heard tell of the new rule that you are making and fearing that you are making it too severe, protest that they have no mind to be bound by it, that you are making it for yourself and not for them." The saint, hearing these words, fell on his knees and raising his eyes to heaven, said: "Lord, did I not tell Thee that these people would not believe me?" And suddenly there came a voice from heaven which said: "Francis, there is nothing of thine in this rule; all that is in it is Mine, and I want the rule kept to the letter, to the letter, to the letter, without gloss, without gloss, without gloss. I know how much human weakness can stand and how much I intend to aid it; let them that have no mind to keep it leave the order and leave it to the rest to observe." Francis turned to the superiors and said: "Have you heard? Have you heard? Have you heard? Do you want me to get it said to you a second time?" And Friar Elias and the superiors, out of themselves, trembling and dumbfounded, recognizing their fault, turned on their heels without uttering another word. The holy patriarch returned to compose his rule, neither more nor less than what the Lord had revealed to him; and, having finished the composition, he took it to the sovereign pontiff, who was Honorius III. The pope reading the rule and remarking on its severity and poverty, which seemed very strait and difficult to observe, St. Francis replied: "I, holy Father, have not put one single word into this rule out of my own opinion and judgment; but our Lord Jesus Christ has compiled and composed it, Who alone knows very well all that is necessary and profitable for the salvation of souls and the good estate of the friars and the preservation of this, His order. To Him all the things to come in the Church and in this order are manifest and present; and that being so, I

neither ought nor can change anything." And the pope, moved by the inspiration of God, gave the bull and apostolic confirmation of the rule, *ad perpetuam rei memoriam*.

In this manner God is wont to inspire and give the rule to the founders of religious orders; and in this manner He inspired and gave it to our holy Father Ignatius. And of this we have another account, even more authentic than the preceding, since we have the apostolic bulls with their leaden seals that say so. Gregory XIII, of happy memory, in the bull and constitution which commences *Ascendente Domino* and in another which he gave before, commencing *Quanto fructuosius*, having first set down all the points of our institute and in particular those that seemed to raise some difficulty and about which he had been informed that some both within and without the Society called for investigation, declares and says expressly these formal words: "Wherefore the said Ignatius by divine inspiration (*divino instinctu*) so considered that the body of the Society should be organized in its members, orders, and grades." What clearer language could have been used?

This being presupposed, let us come to the point and enter into a reckoning with those who seek to form private associations for the altering of a religious institute and of the things established by its founder. Don't you think it is great pride to have such a high idea of oneself and of one's judgment and opinions as to dare to say, the road that Ignatius has left us laid down in his Constitutions is not a good one; it would be better for us to go by the road that pleases me? What greater folly and wrong-headedness could there be? The greatness of this infatuation can be seen from another similar to it; one well exemplifies the other. One of the greatest evils and sins there are in the Church of God is heresy. I do not dispute now whether there can be any other sin greater, since it is clear that a greater sin would be the express hatred of God: but those sins are not commonly committed here on earth; there in

hell is their place. But I say that of the sins that commonly find place here on earth, they say that heresy, whereby one separates oneself from the Church, is the greatest; and with reason, for besides its destroying the foundation of the whole Christian religion, which is faith, and other reasons that there are, does it not strike you as an excessive and extreme pride? To think that anyone should be so confident in himself and hold so fast to his own judgment as to come to believe and rather take for true what seems good to him and suits his fancy, in preference to what the Catholic Roman Church has settled to be believed, what has been approved in so many councils, where has been assembled the cream of all the good there was in the world as well in learning as in sanctity, and has been confirmed by the blood of so many thousands of martyrs who have died for it, and by innumerable miracles that have been wrought in confirmation of it! To think that a man should come to say: "But I rather believe in my last night's dream or in what a Martin Luther tells me"—a bad man and a perverse, an apostate, immoral and living in sacrilegious concubinage! What greater pride and folly, what greater blindness and absurdity could there be! But this is the way they go and this is what in their own measure they do, those persons we are speaking of who prefer their own judgment and opinion to his whom God our Lord has taken for head and founder of this religious order, and think that the way they have dreamt of and invented is better than that which God our Lord has inspired and revealed to him whom He was pleased to take for His principal instrument in the foundation of the Society. It is a pride and presumption like that of Lucifer. What? Has God hidden from our Father Ignatius, whom He chose for head and founder, the right way that was proper for the well-being of the order, and has revealed it to you? Is not this enough to make you understand that it is a deceit and delusion of the devil, who wishes to take you for his means

and instrument to make war on the Society, which he so much abhors, and trouble the peace and union of the order, as he took that other, the heretic, to trouble the peace of the Church? "Oh," you say, "but I am aiming only at the reform of the order." You deceive yourself; the devil, the father of lies, is blinding you with this false and lying phrase, for this is not to reform the Society, but to destroy and undo the Society. And observe that this is no exaggeration, but a plain and very clear truth. To reform an order is, when the order has fallen and departed from its primitive institute, to take measures for its return to its first principles and keep the rule and arrangement which its first founder bequeathed to it. This is a good and holy work, and many religious orders have gone through it in the desire to maintain themselves in their first institute and rule. But to change the institute and primitive way of life that our first founder has left us, inspired by God, and to seek to introduce another way, different from that, is not to reform the order, but to seek to destroy and undo it and create another order, different from the first, of your own design and fashion and to your own taste, as Friar Elias wanted to do with the order of St. Francis; and so this is not the spirit of God, but of the devil.

The holy Council of Trent dealing with the reformation of religious orders and making some very holy decrees to that effect, our Father General James Laynez laid this supplication before those fathers: "Most holy fathers, these decrees of reformation do not seem applicable to our Society of Jesus, seeing that it is at this day a new order, distinct from other orders, and as such has its own distinct methods of procedure, approved by the apostolic see; and by the goodness of God we have not departed from our first institute and rule; and so if these decrees shall be applied to it, it will not be reformed, but destroyed." The holy council fell in with this reason and replied: "Hereby, however, the holy synod does not intend to make any inno-

vation or prohibition to hinder the order of clerks of the Society of Jesus from being able to serve the Lord and His Church according to their pious institute approved by the holy apostolic see" (Trid. Sess. 25, de reform. cap. 16). The holy Council of Trent does not wish nor venture to change the institute and mode of procedure which the Lord gave to the Society by means of our blessed Father Ignatius, as approved by the apostolic see, but on the contrary approved and confirmed it; and have you the hardihood to seek to alter and change it for I know not what human regards and reasons that occur to you?

Quite other esteem, and other regard and reverence did he pay to our institute and its founder—that cardinal of whom there is related in the Life of our Father a thing very much to our purpose. It is related there that the Cardinal of the Holy Cross, Marcellus Cervini, who came afterwards to be pope and took the name of Marcellus II, a little before he was raised to the see of the sovereign pontiff, had a long argument with Father Doctor Olave, a distinguished theologian of the Society, upon that constitution which we have that none of the body can accept any dignity outside of the Society unless compelled thereto by obedience put upon him by one who can command him under pain of sin, and that even the General cannot issue such a command except by order and mandate of the sovereign pontiff, and of this all the professed make a special vow. The cardinal said that the Society would render a greater service to the Church of God by providing it with good bishops than by giving it good preachers and confessors and that the fruit would be all the greater inasmuch as a good bishop can do more than a poor clerk. He alleged many reasons to this effect, to which Father Olave replied, giving him to understand that the greatest service that the Society could render to holy Church was by keeping itself in its proper purity and lowliness, thereby to serve it for a longer period and in greater security. And since in the

end the cardinal, thinking his own reasons the better, stuck to his opinion, Doctor Olave said to him: "If reasons are not enough to convince your illustrious lordship and make you change your mind, the authority of our Father Ignatius, who thought so, is enough to make us believe that that is the better arrangement." Thereupon the cardinal said: "Now I give in and say that you are right, for supposing I thought that reason was on my side, nevertheless the authority of Father Ignatius in this matter would weigh with me more than all the reasons in the world. And even reason itself says the same; for since God our Lord chose him to plant in His Church an order like yours and to spread it all over the world with such fruit of souls and to rule and govern it with such a spirit of prudence as we see has been done and is done, it is also to be believed, and it would seem that it cannot be otherwise, that the same God has revealed and disclosed the manner in which He wishes this order to serve Him and preserve itself for the future." With how greater reason should we ourselves who are religious and should be children of obedience, subject ourselves and submit our judgment when we see that a thing is a rule and constitution of the Society, ordained by him whom our Lord has given us to be its head and founder. And this especially, seeing that it has been since so much approved and confirmed by all the sovereign pontiffs who have been, from then up to this time, and by the holy Council of Trent; and that on this score the Lord has blessed and made such use of the Society, producing such fruit by its means for these sixty years and more! *Trepass not over the ancient boundaries which thy fathers have set*, says the Wise Man (Prov. xxii. 28).

An so to repress such presumption and venturesomeness, His Holiness Gregory XIII in his bull and constitution, *Ascendente Domino*, after having approved and confirmed anew the Institute and manner of life of the Society and in particular the things which some might wish to amend,

commands in virtue of holy obedience, and under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae* and of incapacity for any office or benefice *ipso facto* without further declaration, that no one of any state, rank, and pre-eminence whatsoever shall presume in any manner to impugn or contradict any point of the Institute or Constitutions of the Society, either directly or indirectly, not even under color of disputation or wish to know the truth; and if any doubt arises on these points, he says that it is well that the apostolic see be consulted thereupon or the General of the Society or other persons to whom the matter shall be committed, and that none other shall dare to meddle therewith. The same, even at greater length, is enacted by his successor Gregory XIV in another constitution made on this head, which commences *Ecclesiae Catholicae*, in very grave words. "Considering," he says, "that it would be to the no small prejudice of religious discipline and detriment of all religious life, if what has been in holy fashion laid down by founders of orders and received and approved many times by the same order in its general congregations and, what is more, established and confirmed by this holy apostolic see, should be, not to say changed, but even altered or impugned under any pretext whatsoever, We command in virtue of holy obedience all persons of whatsoever state and condition they be, ecclesiastical or secular or religious, even though they be of the same Society, under pain of excommunication *latae sententiae* and of being held disqualified and incapable of any office and dignity and of privation of active and passive voice, which penalties are incurred *ipso facto* without further declaration, absolution therefrom reserved to the apostolic see; and renewing the constitution of Gregory XIII, our predecessor, and all the penalties therein contained, [We command] that none shall presume to impugn or contradict any point of the Institute or Constitutions or decrees of the Society, either directly or indirectly, or under color of greater good or zeal or any other pretext what-

ever." And he adds another thing very special and substantial, that none is to propose or give in any memorials on the said subject, for anything to be added or struck out or changed except to the sovereign pontiff immediately, or intermediately through his nuncio or apostolic legate, or to the General of the Society or to the general congregation. And our present Holy Father Paul V, in the bull that he issued in the year 1606 confirming the Institute and privileges of the Society, makes special mention of these two constitutions of Gregory XIII and Gregory XIV and approves and grants them anew. Hence it appears what pitfalls there are about this matter, since none can transgress herein without the gravest penalties and without incurring the greater excommunication *ipso facto*, whether he be of the Society or out of it, religious, cleric, or layman, of whatsoever state, rank, condition, and pre-eminence he be.

Let us, then, conclude with the conclusion of St. Paul writing to the Corinthians: *For the rest, brethren, rejoice, be perfect, exhort one another, be of one mind, have peace* (II Cor. xiii. 11). Let us rejoice, my Fathers and brothers, and be glad that the Lord has drawn us to an order so holy and professing such perfection; and let us speak ever of this perfection and how to keep ourselves in great peace and union, exhorting and animating one another thereto; and in this way the Lord, Who is the author and fountain of peace and love, will ever be with us.

▣ FIFTH TREATISE ▣

ON THE EXCELLENCY OF PRAYER



CHAPTER I

Of the Value and Excellence of Prayer

THE glorious Apostle and Evangelist St. John, in the fifth and eighth chapters of the Apocalypse, expresses admirably well the excellency and merit of prayer. *There came an angel and stood before the altar, having in his hand a thurible of gold, to whom was given much incense, to the end he should offer up of the prayers of the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of these prayers went up from the hand of the angel to the presence of God* (Apoc. viii. 3-4). St. Chrysostom says that one proof of the merit of prayer is that in the Holy Scripture it alone is compared to thymiama, which was a composition of incense and of many other admirable perfumes; for as the smell of well-composed thymiama is very delicious, so prayer also, when well made, is very acceptable to God and gives great joy to the angels and all the citizens of heaven. Thus St. John, speaking in such human language as we can speak, says that those heavenly beings hold in their hands pouncet-boxes full of admirable perfumes, which are the prayers of the saints, and these they apply again and again to their most pure nostrils to enjoy that sweet odor (Apoc. v. 8).

St. Augustine, speaking of prayer, says: "What more excellent than prayer? What more useful and profitable? What sweeter and more delicious? What higher and more exalted in the whole scheme of our Christian religion?" The same says St. Gregory of Nyssa: "Nothing of the things of this life that are esteemed and valued has the advantage of prayer." St. Bernard says that, though it is quite an ordinary thing for the angels to assist God's servants by their invisible presence, to deliver them from the

deceits and machinations of the enemy, and to raise their desires to serve God with greater fervor, yet it is especially when we are occupied in making our prayer that these angelic spirits assist us. He quotes to this effect many passages of Holy Scripture, as that of the psalmist: *In the sight and presence of the angels I will praise thee* (Psalm cxxxvii. 1); and again: *There went forward the princes along with the singers in the midst of the young maidens sounding their timbrels* (Psalm lxvii. 26), which he interprets, saying that the angels join with those who make prayer; and again what the angel said to Toby: *When thou didst pray with tears, I offered thy prayer to God* (Tob. xii. 12). In the instant that prayer goes out from the mouth of him that prays, at once the angels, who are hard by, catch it up and present it to God. St. Hilary says the same: "The angels preside over the prayers of the saints and offer them each day to God." Thus, when we are at prayer, we are surrounded by angels, in the midst of angels, doing the office of angels, exercising ourselves in what we are to do forever in heaven, praising and blessing the Lord; and for this we are specially favored and loved by the angels as being their companions now and destined to be their companions hereafter, filling up the seats of their former companions who fell.

St. John Chrysostom, speaking of the excellences of prayer and wishing to say great things of it, says that one of the greatest of great things that it is possible to say of it is that whoever is at prayer is dealing and conversing with God. "Consider the height, dignity, and glory to which the Lord has raised you, in that you can speak and converse with God, hold conversations and colloquies with Jesus Christ, desire what you would, and ask for what you desire"—*Considera quanta est tibi concessa felicitas, quanta gloria attributa orationibus, fabulari cum Deo, cum Christo miscere colloquia, optare quod velis, quod desideras postulare*. No tongue, he says, suffices to declare the dig-

nity and height of this intercourse and conversation with God or its utility and profit for ourselves. If in those who here on earth ordinarily converse with prudent and wise men, in a short time there is felt a notable improvement, and it is recognized that they have advanced in prudence and wisdom, and to those who converse with good men virtue and goodness is communicated—hence the proverb: “Deal with the good and you shall be one of them”—what shall be said of those who speak and converse again and again with God? *Approach to the Lord and ye shall receive light from Him* (Psalm xxxiii. 6). What light and knowledge, what blessings and benefits shall they receive from such dealing and conversation! And so St. John Chrysostom says that there is nothing that makes us grow so much in virtue as frequent prayer and dealing and conversing repeatedly with God, because thereby there comes to be formed the heart of a generous and high-souled man, a heart ready to despise the things of the world and to soar above them, uniting and transforming itself in a manner unto God and becoming spiritual and holy.

CHAPTER II

Of the Need in Which We Stand of Prayer

OF the need in which we stand of prayer we have abundant experience; would to God we had not so much! For man, being in such need of the favor of God by reason of his being liable to so many falls, surrounded by so many dangerous enemies, and wanting so many things for soul and body, has no other resource but constant recourse to God, begging with his whole heart divine favor and aid in all his dangers and necessities. So King Josaphat said, coming to be surrounded by enemies: *As we are so weak and so poor and so needy and know not what to do, we have no other resource but to raise our eyes to God, and ask in*

prayer for what we want and stand in need of (II Chron. xx. 12). So Pope Celestine in a decretal letter to teach the importance of prayer, says: "I know nothing better to say to you than what my predecessor, Zozimus, said: 'What time is there in which we have not need of God?' None. Then in every time, in all cases, in all affairs we need to have recourse to Him by prayer and crave His favor; great pride it is for a weak and miserable man to presume anything of himself"—*In omnibus igitur actibus, causis, cogitationibus, motibus, adiutor et protector orandus est Deus.*

St. Thomas, treating of prayer, gives one very good and substantial reason for its necessity, and it is the teaching of Saints Damascene, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, and Gregory, that what God by His divine providence and disposition has determined from eternity to give to souls, that He gives them in time by this means of prayer, and on this means depends the deliverance, salvation, conversion, and cure of many souls and the progress and perfection of others. Thus, just as God has determined and arranged that by means of matrimony the human race should be multiplied, and by means of ploughing and sowing and cultivating the earth there should be abundance of bread and wine and other fruits, and by means of craftsmen and building materials there should be houses and buildings, so He has determined to work many effects in the world and impart many graces and gifts to souls by this means of prayer. So Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel: *Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and the door shall be opened to him that knocked* (Matt. vii. 7). Thus this is the means and this the conduct whereby the Lord wishes to supply our needs and enrich our poverty and fill us with good things and graces. Hereby is well seen the great need that we have of having recourse to prayer. And so the saints make a good comparison in saying that it is a chain of gold

attached to heaven and reaching right down to earth, whereby all good things are lowered and let down to us and whereby we must mount up to God. Or they say that it is the ladder of Jacob, that reached from earth to heaven, whereby angels ascended and descended. The glorious St. Augustine says that prayer is the key of heaven that fits all the gates of heaven and all the coffers of the treasures of God, and nothing hidden from it. And elsewhere he says that what bread is to the body, prayer is to the soul. The same says the holy martyr and abbot Nilus.

One of the chief reasons whereby the saints declare on the one hand the value and worth of prayer and on the other the great need in which we stand of it, is that prayer is a chief and most efficacious means to attune and put in order our whole life and to overcome and smooth down all the difficulties that present themselves in the way of virtue. And so they say that on it depends the government of our whole life; and that, when prayer is well in order, life is well in order; and when prayer gets out of order, everything else gets out of order. "He knows how to live well, who knows how to pray well"—*Recte novit vivere, qui recte novit orare*, says St. Augustine. And St. John Climacus says that a servant of God once spoke a memorable word to him, which was this, that from early morning he knew what was to be the order of the whole day; meaning that, if he made his morning prayer well, all the rest went well, and contrariwise when he did not make his morning prayer well. And it is the same with all the rest of life. And so we ourselves very commonly experience that when we make our prayer well, we go on in such good order, so cheerful, so vigorous, so full of good purposes and desires, that it is something to praise God for; and, contrariwise, when we are careless at prayer, everything goes amiss. St. Bonaventure says: "Where prayer fails, thereupon everything goes forlorn;" thereupon tepidity sets in, thereupon little by little the spirit begins to grow feeble and to wither

and to lose that vigor and heartiness which it once had; thereupon, I know not how, all those holy purposes and thoughts of first fervor disappear and all our passions begin to awake and revive; thereupon the man comes out a lover of vain mirth, a lover of talking, laughing and enjoyment, and such like other vanities; and what is worse, thereupon there bursts into new life the appetite of vainglory, of anger, of envy, of ambition, and the like, which before seemed to be dead.

The Abbot Nilus says that prayer should be the looking-glass of the religious. In it we should look and look again every day for a long time to see and recognize our faults, to go on getting rid of anything ugly that we find in ourselves. In this looking-glass we should look and study the virtues that shine forth in Christ, in order with them to adorn and beautify our soul. The glorious St. Francis says: "One of the things most desirable in a religious is the grace of prayer: without it there is no hope of fruit or improvement; with it everything may be hoped for." St. Thomas Aquinas, among other grave utterances related in his Life, said that a religious without prayer was a soldier in battle naked and without arms. That holy archbishop of Valentia, Friar Thomas of Villanova, said that prayer was like the natural heat of the stomach, without which it is impossible for the natural life to be preserved, or for any food to do good; whereas with it everything is well digested and assimilated, the man is nourished, and all the members are supplied with virtue and strength enough to do their work. So, he says, without prayer the spiritual life cannot be preserved; with it, it is preserved; with it, the man revives and recovers spiritual strength enough for all the works of obedience that he has to do and for all the occasions and afflictions that may offer; with prayer, all those things are digested and made light, and all converted to the profit of the soul. Finally, if we use prayer as we ought, we shall find therein a remedy for all our faults and

a means of preserving ourselves in virtue and religion. If perchance you become careless in obedience and observance of rules, if you begin to grow disorderly on any point, if passion and evil habit begin to revive, all this will be checked and remedied, by favor of the Lord, at once when we betake ourselves to prayer. And if you grow remiss in prayer itself and careless therein, you must cure and recover yourself by that same means. In prayer we have a universal remedy even for a falling off in prayer itself. Thus they make an excellent comparison who say that prayer is as the hand in the body, which is an instrument for all the body and even for itself, since the hand works for the sustenance and clothing of the whole body and for all other things necessary for body and soul and even for itself; for if it is ailing, the hand waits on the hand; if it is dirty, the hand washes the hand; if it is cold, the hand warms the hand; in short, the hands do everything. So it is with prayer.

CHAPTER III

*That We Owe Much to God for Having Made So Easy
for Us a Thing at Once So Excellent and So Necessary*

IT will be reasonable for us to consider and ponder here the great and singular favor that the Lord has done us. Prayer being in itself a thing so high and excellent and on the other hand so necessary for us, God has made it so easy for all that it is always in our power to take to it in every place and at every time. *With me is prayer to make to God who giveth me life*, says the Prophet David (Psalm xli. 9). The gates of God's mercy are never closed; they are wide open to all at every time and at every hour. We shall always find Him disengaged and desirous to do us good, and even soliciting us to ask. There is an excellent reflection that is often made to this effect. If God were to give leave once a month only for all who would to go in and

address Him, promising to give them an audience willingly and to do them favors, it would be a boon highly valued, as it would be if a temporal king made a similar offer. How much more reasonable is it that we should value the offer and invitation that God makes us herein, not merely once a month, but every day and many times a day! *At night and at morning and at midday and in the afternoon*, says the prophet, embracing all times, *I will tell and put before God* (Psalm liv. 18) my labors and miseries, in full confidence that every time and at whatever hour I approach Him He will hear me and do me favors. God is not like men, annoyed at being asked, for, unlike them, He is none the poorer for giving. A man has so much the less, by how much he bestows on another; he robs himself of that which he gives and is the poorer for his liberality. It is for this reason, then, that men are annoyed at being asked; and if they give once or twice with good will, they are tired of it the third time, and give nothing or give in such a way that they are never asked again. *God*, as St. Paul says, *is rich and liberal to all who call upon him* (Rom. x. 12). He is infinitely rich; and as He makes Himself none the poorer by giving, so He is not angry nor weary at people asking of Him, though it be every minute and He have the whole world begging at His door. He is rich enough for all and to enrich all, without ceasing to be as rich as before; and as the fund of His riches is infinite, so also the source of His mercy is inexhaustible, to meet the needs of all; and He desires that we should beg of Him and have recourse to Him very frequently. It will be reasonable, then, for us to acknowledge and be grateful for so great a favor and benefit and to make the best of so large and advantageous a licence, taking care to be very assiduous in prayer. For, as St. Augustine says upon these words of the psalmist: *Blessed be our Lord, who has not deprived me of my prayer nor of his mercy*. We must believe for certain that if God withdraw not from us the spirit of prayer, neither will He

withdraw His mercy. Wherefore, that His mercy may never forsake us, let us never leave off the exercise of prayer.

CHAPTER IV

Of Two Sorts of Mental Prayer

LEAVING apart vocal prayer, a thing so holy and in such common use in the Church of God, we will for the present treat only of mental prayer, of which St. Paul writes: *I will pray, sing, and cry to God in spirit and with my heart* (I Cor. xiv. 15). There are two sorts of mental prayer, one common and easy, the other very special, extraordinary, and advanced, something received rather than made, according to the saying of ancient saints well versed in prayer. St. Denis the Areopagite says of his master, Hierotheus, that *erat patiens divina*, that is to say, he rather received what God gave than did things for himself. There is a very great difference between these two sorts of prayer; the former may in some measure be taught by words, the second we cannot so teach because no words are able to express it. It is a *hidden manna, which no man knoweth but him that receiveth it* (Apoc. ii. 17). Even the receiver cannot explain how it is nor even properly understand how it is, as Cassian well observes, quoting to this effect what he calls a divine and heavenly saying of the blessed St. Anthony Abbot: "Prayer is not perfect so long as the monk at prayer is aware of the very fact that he is praying." This high and exalted prayer does not leave room for the person to bethink himself, nor reflect on what he is about, "suffering," we should say, rather than "doing." It happens not unfrequently that a man has his mind so taken up and absorbed in some business that he remembers not himself, nor where he is, nor reflects upon what he thinks, nor observes how he thinks. It is the same in this perfect prayer, wherein man is so ravished and lost in God that he

thinks no more of himself, nor understands how this is, nor what way it goes, nor what way it comes, nor keeps any account of methods, preambles, or points, nor how he must now do this and now that. This is what happened to St. Anthony himself, of which Cassian makes mention, that oftentimes having set himself to prayer overnight, he remained in it till the next day, when, the light falling upon his eyes, he complained that the sun rose too soon to deprive him of those lights which God interiorly communicated unto him. St. Bernard, speaking of this kind of prayer, says that we very seldom find it, and when we do, its stay is very short. *Rara hora, parva mora*; so that how long time soever it lasts, it seems to us all to have been done in a moment. St. Augustine, experiencing in himself the effects it produces, says: "Lord, Thou leadest me on to a tenderness very unusual, and a strange sweetness, such that if it were to go on, I know not where it would stop." Even in this most special prayer and contemplation St. Bernard marks three degrees. The first he compares to eating; the second to drinking, which is easier and pleasanter than eating because there is no labor for the teeth; the third in inebriation. And he quotes the saying of the spouse in the Canticles: *Eat, my friends, and drink and be inebriated, my dear ones* (Cant. v. 1). All this is a case of receiving rather than of doing. Sometimes the gardener draws water from his well by force of his arms; at others, standing with folded arms, he sees the flood from heaven soaking the earth without his doing anything else but receive it and guide it to the roots of the trees to make them more fruitful. So there are two kinds of prayer: the one is sought with industry, aided by God; the other is found ready made. By the first you go toiling and begging, and living on what you beg; the second sets before you a full table, which God has spread for you to satisfy your hunger, a rich and abundant table, signified by those words of the spouse: *The king hath led me into his cellars*

(Cant. i. 3). And again: *I will gladden them in the house of my prayer* (Isaias lvi. 7).

This prayer is a particular gift of God, a gift which He bestows upon whom He pleases; sometimes in reward of services done and much mortification practised and suffering borne for His love; at other times as a gracious gift of sheer liberality irrespective of previous merits, as it is said in the Gospel: *Is it not lawful for me to do what I please?* (Matt. xx. 15). Anyhow, it is not a thing that we can teach. And so certain authors have been reprov'd and prohibited for having undertaken to teach what cannot be learned nor taught, making a matter of art what is above all art, as though in their way one could infallibly arrive at becoming a contemplative. Gerson severely reprehends this in a book he composed against Ruysbroek, in these words: "You have torn the flower from the root." As the flower cut from the root and taken in hand soon withers and loses its beauty, so these intimate communications of God to the soul in this high and lofty prayer are of such a nature that in the attempt to take them out of their place and explain and share them with others, they lose their luster and splendor. So do they act who try to explain and teach what cannot be explained or understood. These analogical acts, these transformations of the soul, this silence, this self-annihilation, this immediate union, this depth of Tauler—what is the use of talking of such things if you understand them not, nor know what you are talking about? Nay, some say, and say well, that there is this difference between this divine science and other sciences, that in other sciences, before you learn them, you must learn their terms, whereas in this you cannot understand the terms till you perfectly possess and are master of the science. In others, the theory precedes the practice; in this, the practice goes before the theory.

I say still further that not only we cannot express what this prayer is, nor teach it to others, but you must not seek

to apply yourself to it nor raise yourself to it if God does not raise you, apply you, and lift you up to it. That would be great pride and presumption, and you would deserve to be deprived of the grace of prayer that you have and be left without any. *He hath led me*, says the spouse, *into his cellar* (Cant. ii. 4). This entry which God gives to the soul into His privacy and into His wine cellar, to sate and inebriate her with His love, is a most particular gift of the Lord; the bride did not go in by herself, no, not until her Beloved took her by the hand and led her in. That lifting of yourself up to the kiss of His mouth is not a thing that you can or ought to do unless He Himself lifts you up. It would be great impertinence and audacity. Even the bride does not dare do that—she is too bashful and humble for that—but she begs of her Beloved to give her this kiss: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth*; meaning, as St. Bernard says: “I cannot of my own strength attain to such love and such high union and contemplation as this unless He give it me.” It is His goodness and gracious liberality that must raise us to this kiss of the mouth, to this so high prayer and contemplation, if He be pleased that we should reach it. It is not a thing that we can teach or that we can or ought to lay ourselves out for.

CHAPTER V

How Holy Writ Lays Before Us These Two Sorts of Prayer

THESE two sorts of prayer that we have spoken of are marvelously set before us by the Holy Ghost in the thirty-ninth chapter of Ecclesiasticus. He says there of the wise man, by whom the Church understands the just: *He will set his heart to watch at break of day to the Lord who made him, and will pray in the sight of the Most High* (Ecclus. xxxix. 6). He puts first the ordinary prayer. The

man must rise in the morning, which is the time suited for prayer and is often spoken of in Scripture. *In the morning I will present myself before thee. Let me anticipate the dawn and cry out. Mine eyes have opened early in the morning unto thee, O Lord, to meditate thy words. To thee I watch from break of day* (Psalm v. 5; cxviii. 148; lxii. 2). The text says to *watch* because he is going to be wide-awake, not to sleep and meditate on a pillow. What more? *He will set his heart*, hand it over to prayer. He is not there in body only while his heart is on business. That is what the saints call "sleepiness of heart." Faintness and sloth of heart are great obstacles to prayer because they hinder the reverence which one should observe in dealing with God. And what is it that causes this reverence in the just? The consideration that I am in the presence of God and that I am about to speak to a Majesty so high—that makes me stand in reverence and at attention. This is the preparation and disposition wherewith we should go to prayer.

But let us see what prayer it is that the just man makes. *He will open his mouth in prayer, and begin by begging pardon for his sins* (Ecclus. xxxix. 7), moving himself to shame and repentance for them. This is the prayer that we should make on our side, bewailing our sins and begging God's mercy and pardon for them. We must not content ourselves with saying: "I made my general confession at the beginning of my conversion and after that I spent some days in bewailing and repenting of my sins." It is not right that we should forget our sins upon confessing them, but we should endeavor to keep them ever before our eyes, according to the saying of the prophet: *My sin is always before me*, that is, before my eyes. On the words, *Our bed is strewn with flowers* (Cant. i. 15), St. Bernard says: "Your bed, that is, your heart, is still malodorous because you have not quite got rid of the vices and follies that you brought in from the world; and have you the audacity to

invite the Bridegroom to come to it? Do you wish now to practise other exercises, high and exalted, of love and union with God, as if you were perfect?" Make it your first care to cleanse and wash your bed well with tears. *Every night I will wash my bed, and moisten my couch with my tears* (Psalm vi. 7). Then you have to adorn it with the flowers of virtues, and so invite the Bridegroom to come to you as he did to the bride. Busy yourself with the kiss of the feet, humbling yourself and grieving much for your sins; and with the kiss of the hands, which is offering your good works to God and seeking to receive at His hands true and solid virtues; and as for that third kiss of the mouth, that high and exalted union, leave that till such time as the Lord shall please to raise you to it.

It is told of a very ancient and spiritual father (Father Araoz) that he spent twenty years in these exercises of the purgative way. And are we to get tired of it at once and seek to ascend to the kiss of the mouth and the exercises of the love of God? We need a good foundation to raise so high a building. Besides many other good and profitable things that there are in this exercise, of which we shall speak hereafter, there is this about it, that it is a great remedy and efficient preservative against falling into sin. He who is continually abhorring sin and making acts of shame and sorrow for having offended God, is very far from committing sin anew. And, contrariwise, the saints observe that the reason why some have fallen who seemed to be very spiritual men and men of prayer, and possibly were so, is for want of this exercise; they gave themselves over in such manner to other exercises and considerations, sweet and to their taste, that they forgot the exercise of self-knowledge and consideration of their sins and so came to an unmeasured sense of security, not walking in such fear and reserve as they ought, and thereby they came to fall into what they ought not; they too quickly forgot their low estate and fell from the height they thought to have

attained. It is fitting, then, that for a long time our prayers should consist in bewailing our sins, as the Wise Man says, until such time as the Lord takes us by the hand and says, *Friend, go up higher* (Luke xiv. 10).

Now let us see what this high and very special prayer is, which the Lord gives when He pleases. The text goes on: *If the great God and Lord please, he will fill him with the spirit of understanding* (Ecclus. xxxix. 8). *If he please*, because this is no hereditary right, but a grace and mere effect of His liberality. You are at prayer, and on a sudden there comes a light from heaven, like a flash of lightning, whereby you are set thinking and see the point and get an appreciation and high notion of what you never understood before. That is the gift of prayer. How many times you have traveled over the same ground, and your attention was never arrested on it as now! He calls that *the spirit of understanding* because nothing appears in it but a simple apprehension, upon which the man becomes tranquil and at rest, with that light shed upon him. It happens in this world sometimes that a man comes across a very perfect and highly finished picture, and he stands regarding it for a long time, with his eyes fixed, without moving about, wrapt in mighty admiration, so that he cannot have enough of looking at it; such is this prayer and high and exalted contemplation. Or, to speak better, this is the way in which the blessed in heaven see God. Heavenly bliss consists in the sight and contemplation of God. In it we shall be absorbed and penetrated through and through with the vision and love of God for ever and ever, with one simple vision of that Divine Majesty, rejoicing in His presence and in His glory, without any wandering of the mind and without ever being weary of looking at Him; or rather, as the text says, *and they sang as it were a new song before the throne* (Apoc. xiv. 3), that song and that divine manna will always be something new to us and we shall be ever in new admiration.

In this way, then, there is carried on here on earth this high and perfect prayer which is called contemplation when the Lord is pleased to give it, so that the person is never sated or cloyed with seeing and contemplating God, without play of the mind hither and thither, without fatigue, all by one simple look. The text says, *He will fill him*, because His grace is so copious and so abundant that it overflows and cannot be contained in so narrow a vessel. And so the text goes on at once with the following: *And he will pour out the words of his wisdom like rain, and in prayer he will praise the Lord* (Ecclus. xxxix. 9). Thence immediately follow colloquies; this is the proper time to converse with God, when the soul is moved, instructed, and lifted up by this heavenly light and wisdom.

And so our Father marks this time for making colloquies. "When a spiritual movement comes over us, we will make colloquies." Be this saying well taken note of. After we have helped ourselves by the use of our reasoning powers, meditating and considering, when the meditation now has inflamed our heart and we feel moved thereby, then is the time for colloquies and treating familiarly with God by petitions and determinations, because this is the prayer that God hears, and that leads to a happy settlement with His Divine Majesty. As St. Augustine says, when God moves one to ask, it is a sign that He intends to give what is asked. This is the very special kind of prayer that God gives to whom He pleases. *For if the great Lord willeth, he will fill him with the spirit of understanding* (Ecclus. xxxix.). If He wills, we shall easily be able to reach this high and singularly excellent prayer.

But if the Lord is not pleased to raise us to such a high prayer as this, St. Bernard says we must not be afflicted nor discouraged, but be content with the practice of virtues and with the fact that the Lord keeps us in His friendship and grace and does not let us fall into sin. He says: "Oh, that the Lord may be pleased to give me peace, good-

ness, and joy in the Holy Ghost, mercy, simplicity and charity to my neighbor; with that I am content! As for those other high contemplations, in heaven's name let them be kept for apostles and great saints"—*Utinam detur mihi pax, bonitas, gaudium in Spiritu Sancto, misereri in hilaritate, tribuere in simplicitate, gaudere cum gaudentibus, flere cum flentibus, et his contentus ero. Cetera sanctis apostolis virisque apostolicis relinquo. High mountains for stags, the rock the refuge of urchins* (Psalm ciii. 18). Those high mountains of contemplation are for such as run to perfection with the nimbleness of stags and deer; but I, who am an urchin, or hedgehog, full of thorns and faults and sins, betake myself to the *holes* of that *rock*, which is *Christ* (I Cor. x. 4), and wash away my faults and sins in the blood that flows from them, and that shall be my prayer.

But if the glorious Bernard was content with the practice of the virtues and grief and contrition for his sins, and left that other very special prayer to apostolic men and great saints to whom the Lord is pleased to impart it, it will be right for us also to be content therewith, and to make this our exercise in prayer—to conceive sorrow and shame for our sins and attend to the mortifying of our passions and the rooting up of our vices and the overcoming of all the repugnances and difficulties that may confront us in the way of virtue. As for that other very special and eminently high prayer, let us leave it till the time that the Lord shall be pleased to call and raise us thereto. And even then, when we think that we are called to it, there is need of great caution and of much sober deliberation, for there are apt to be in this matter many delusions. Sometimes a man thinks that God calls him to this prayer because of a certain sweetness and pleasantness and facility which he feels in the exercise of the love of God; and God does not call him, but it is he himself that mounts up and meddles with it, the devil deceiving and blinding him, that

he may leave what is necessary and do nothing and profit nothing either way or the other.

A great master of spirit says very well that as it would show little sense of propriety for a man unceremoniously to seat himself at the king's table without his command and licence when the king himself had commanded that man to assist and wait upon him; so he does very ill and very rudely who seeks to deliver himself up entirely to the sweet repose of contemplation not being evidently called thereto by God Himself. St. Bonaventure gives a good admonition here, that a man should exercise himself in the line that is safer and more profitable; that is, in the extirpation of vices and evil inclinations and in the acquisition of true virtues. That is a very plain and safe road, on which there can be no delusions. The more a man busies himself with mortification, humiliation, and resignation, the more he will please God and will merit more of Him than by those other exquisite and extraordinary ways, in which, St. Bonaventure goes on to say, there are apt to be many deceits and many illusions of the devil, the man taking that to be God which is not God and that to be something great which is nothing. For this reason extraordinary kinds of prayer must be examined in the light of the rules governing ordinary prayer, and not the latter by the former, which is the common doctrine of the saints, as we shall see presently.

CHAPTER VI

Wherein This Doctrine Is Further Explained and Confirmed

FOR the greater confirmation and explanation of this doctrine, the saints and masters of spiritual life here observe that, to arrive at this high prayer and contemplation that we spoke of, there is necessary great mortification of our passions and a thorough grounding to begin with in the moral virtues and much time spent in their exercise;

otherwise they say it will be vain to pretend to enter upon this contemplation or make profession of it. It is proper, they say, to be Jacob wrestling before being Israel, *who sees God face to face* (Gen. xxxii. 30)—*Oportet ut prius sis Iacob luctans quam Israel Deum videns* (St. Bernard). You must first be a strong wrestler and vanquish your passions and evil inclinations before arriving at this intimate union with God. Blossius says that whoever seeks to arrive at a very excellent degree of divine love without first applying himself with great diligence to the correction and mortification of his vices and the casting off from himself of the inordinate love of creatures, is like a man who, laden with lead and iron and bound hand and foot, were to climb a very high tree. Wherefore they advise masters of spirit that, before treating with their disciples of this contemplation, they should first make them busy themselves with thorough mortification of all their passions and the formation of habits of virtue—patience, humility, obedience—and long exercise in the practice thereof. They call this the “active” life, which should go before the “contemplative.” Failing to observe that, many who have not proceeded by these steps, but have sought to rise to contemplation without due order, are found after many years of prayer very devoid of virtue, impatient, passionate, proud, so that, once you touch them on the sore point, they burst out into unmeasured words of impatience, clearly showing how far they are from perfection and mortification.

Our Father General Everard Mercurian declared this very well in a letter that he wrote on this matter in these words. “There are many who, rather from lack of discretion than from desire of improvement, when they hear tell of another, and that a very high, practice of prayer, of love of God, of anagogical acts, and a certain indescribable silence, have sought to ascend to the practice of the unitive way before their time. Thus they have lost much time and have covered very little ground; and at the end of many

years they find themselves with their passions as lively, with their affections as uncontrolled, as great lovers of their comfort as if they had never dealt with nor had had any communication with God. They are as wedded to their own will, as backward in submitting their own judgment, when superiors have wished to make some arrangement about them that did not please them or was not to their mind, as they were on the first day. The reason of this is that they wanted to fly before they had wings. They skipped and scampered over the ground and did not go by the measured steps that they should have taken; they did not first ground themselves in mortification and the practice of the virtues; and so without foundation they could not set up a good building. They built on sand, and so they fail in the hour of emergency."

Hence we may see how true, how common and general is this doctrine; it is what the saints commonly say when they assign three parts or three manners of prayer, according to the three ways called respectively purgative, illuminative, and unitive. Such is the holy doctrine drawn out by St. Denis the Areopogite, and after him by St. Gregory Nazianzene and by all the rest who treat of spiritual things. They say, and all agree in this, that before dealing with this so high and lofty prayer that belongs to the unitive way, we must occupy ourselves with what belongs to the purgative and illuminative. First it is necessary to exercise ourselves in sorrow and repentance for our sins and to root out from ourselves vicious and evil inclinations and to acquire true virtues, imitating Christ, in Whom they shine forth; because if we sought to pass on further without that, it would be without foundation, and so we should always remain imperfect and unformed, as he who should try to pass into the class of the seniors without being well grounded in that of the juniors, and to mount the second step of a ladder without going on the first.

CHAPTER VII

Of Ordinary Mental Prayer

LEAVING aside the very special and extraordinary prayer, since we can neither teach nor explain what it is nor how it is, nor does it depend on our will to have it, nor does God bid us attain it, nor will He ask us any account of it, we will treat now of the mental prayer which is ordinary and common and can in some sort be taught and attained by labors and counsels with the aid of the grace of the Lord.

Amongst the other favors and benefits that the Lord has done us in the Society, this is a very particular one, that He has given us a method of prayer to go by, approved by the apostolic see, in the Book of Spiritual Exercises of our blessed Father Ignatius, as appears by the brief which is at the beginning of them, in which His Holiness Paul III, after having had them strictly examined, approved and confirmed them, saying they were very useful and wholesome, and strongly exhorted all the faithful to go through the practice of them. Our Lord imparted to our Father this method of prayer, and he imparted it to us in the same order in which our Lord imparted it to him. And we must have great confidence in God that by this way and method which He has given us, He will help us and do us favors, since with it He gained our Father and his companions, and after them many others, and therein He made known to him the method and plan of the Society, as he said. We must not seek other ways and other extraordinary methods of prayer, but do our best to mold ourselves upon what we have, like good and true sons.

In the Exercise of the Powers, which is the first of the Exercises, our Father teaches us the method to be followed in prayer in all the rest of the exercises. It is that in each point that we take in hand, we must go exercising the three

powers of our soul, memory, understanding, and will—first, by memory putting before the eyes of the understanding the point or mystery on which we wish to make meditation; and then the understanding comes in, reasoning, meditating, and considering the things that will better aid us to move our wills; and thereupon must follow the affections of the will. This third is the principal exercise in which we should dwell, since it is the end of the meditation and the fruit to be drawn from all the considerations and reasonings of the understanding. That is all ordained to move the will to the desire of good and abhorrence of evil. On this account he gave this exercise the name of the Three Powers because it is the first exercise in which he teaches us this method of prayer; although in all the exercises that follow, the three powers must also be exercised as in the first.

This method of prayer which our Father here teaches and the Society practises, is not singular, nor has it any contrivances apt to issue in illusions, as is the case with some others. Rather it is a method very common and much in use among the ancient Fathers, and very conformable to human nature, which is argumentative and rational, governed by reason and by reason is persuaded, convinced, and brought over, which makes this method easier, safer, and more profitable. Thus we must not be in prayer after the manner of persons languishing or dazed with light, without doing anything, which would be a great delusion and error; but we must cry therein to God by means of the exercise of our powers and co-operate along with Him; for God requires the co-operation of His creatures, and that is what our Father teaches us in the Book of Exercises. Other methods there are of prayer by giving up reasonings, employing negations and certain silences, taken from mystical theology. These methods commonly should not be taught, nor sought either, as we have said before. Young people, who are no great hands at the knowledge of their

passions and the practice of virtues, if they are set to these particular methods, are liable to illusions and deceits; and when they think they have gained some advantage, they find themselves with their passions all vigorous and unabated, passions which were lulled to sleep by this food and bait of prayer, and now wake up and prove very dangerous. Moreover, in these choice and particular methods there is engendered a hardness of judgment, a disposition that lends itself to any delusion; and so our blessed Father Ignatius apprehended, saying that such people generally have something of that about them.

I say, then, that the first thing we have to do in meditation, in whatever point we take in hand, is to put before us by memory the point on which we wish to meditate. The second is to enter on the meditation, which is to be done by reasoning with the understanding, considering and reflecting on the particular aspects of that mystery; and thereupon must follow the affections of the will. Thus the memory proposes the subject, and forthwith the reasoning and meditation of the understanding must find place, for this is the source from whence must flow all the acts and exercises which we make in our prayer, and everything else that is done in the prayer is done in virtue of this. The reason whereof is clear in sound philosophy; for our will is a blind power, which cannot take a step without the understanding's going before: *nihil volitum quin praecognitum*. This is a common maxim of philosophers; the will cannot will a thing that has not first passed through the understanding. The understanding is the linkboy that goes before, lighting the path of the will and guiding it, and showing it what to go for and what to shun. So St. Augustine: "A thing may be loved that is not seen by the eyes, but not a thing that is not known"—*Invisa diligere possunt, incognita nequaquam*. And St. Gregory: "None can love what he is absolutely ignorant of." We may well love things that we do not see; but what we have no knowledge

of at all, we cannot love, for the object of the will is good understood as such. We love and go after a thing because we apprehend it as good and worthy of being loved; and, contrariwise, we abhor a thing and shun it, because we judge and apprehend it to be evil and worthy of abhorrence. So when we wish anyone to change his mind and purpose, we try to persuade him with reasons and convince his understanding that what he is bent on doing is not fitting or good and that the other course is the better and proper for him, so to lead him to abandon the one and embrace the other. Thus the act and reasoning of the understanding is the foundation of all the other acts and exercises that we do in prayer, and that is why meditation is so necessary.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Necessity of Meditation

HUGH OF ST. VICTOR says that no prayer can be perfect which is not preceded or accompanied by meditation. This is the doctrine of St. Augustine, who says that prayer without meditation is lukewarm. They prove it very well, since if one does not exercise himself in knowing and considering his misery and weakness, he will fall under delusion and will not know how to ask in prayer for what befits him, nor with the fervor that is befitting. Many through not knowing and studying their faults become the prey of delusions, and presume upon themselves in a way that they would not presume if they did know themselves; and so they treat in prayer of other things than those that are necessary. But if you want to know how to pray and ask God for what befits you, exercise yourself in considering your faults and miseries, and in that way you will know what you ought to ask; and considering and understanding your great need, you will ask for it with fervor and as you

ought to ask, as does the poor needy man who knows and understands well his necessity and poverty.

St. Bernard, arguing that we are not to mount to perfection by flying but by walking, says that walking and mounting to perfection must be done with two feet, meditation and prayer; since meditation shows what is wanting to us, and prayer obtains it; meditation shows us the way, and prayer carries us along it; lastly, by meditation we know the dangers that encompass us, and by prayer we escape and are delivered from them. Hence St. Augustine comes to say that meditation is the beginning of all good, since whoever well considers how good God is in Himself, and how good and merciful He has been to us, how He has created us, how much He has done and suffered for us, is at once fired with love for this good Lord; and whoever knows well his faults and miseries, comes to humble and make little account of himself; and whoever considers how badly he has served God and how much he has offended Him, feels himself worthy of any penalty and chastisement; and thus by meditation the soul comes to be enriched with all virtues.

Therefore it is that Holy Scripture so much recommends to us meditation: *Blessed is the man that meditateth day and night on the law of the Lord; he shall be as a tree planted near streams of water, that shall yield much fruit* (Psalm i. 1-3). *Blessed are they who search his commandments, and seek him with all their heart* (Psalm cxviii. 2). These are they who seek Him with all their heart, and by this they seek Him. And so the prophet asks God for grace to keep His law. *Give me understanding, and I will search into thy law, and keep it with all my heart* (Psalm cxviii. 34). And, contrariwise: *If it were not for the regular meditation that I make on thy law, perhaps by this time I should have perished in my humility* (Psalm cxviii. 82), that is, in my difficulties and dangers, as St. Jerome explains. Thus one of the greatest praises that the saints bestow on medi-

tation and consideration, or even the greatest, is that it is a great helper to all the virtues and to all good works. Gerson calls it "the sister of reading, the nurse of prayer, the guide of action, the perfection and withal the consummation of all things."

But because contrary comes to be better known by contrary, one of the principal causes of all the evils in the world is want of consideration, according to the saying of the Prophet Jeremy: *With desolation is all the earth laid desolate, because there is none who considereth in the heart* (Jerem. xii. 11), none who stops to think attentively. The principal cause of the spiritual desolation of the earth and of the multitude of sins in the world, is that there is hardly anyone who will enter into himself and stop to think and turn over in his heart the mysteries of God. For who would dare to commit a mortal sin if he reflected that God died for sin and that it is so great an evil that it was necessary for God to make Himself man to satisfy in all rigor of justice for it? Who would dare to sin if he reflected that for one mortal sin God chastises in hell for ever and ever? If one set himself to think over and weigh well that sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire* (Matt. xxv. 41)—that eternity! that for ever and ever!—and that so long as God is God he must burn in hell, who would there be who for the pleasure of a moment would choose everlasting torments?

St. Thomas Aquinas used to say it was a thing he could not understand how a person in mortal sin could laugh and make merry. And he had much reason to say so, because the man knows for certain that, if he were to die, he would go to hell forever, and he is not sure of one moment of life. There was that man [Damocles] in feastings and fine music and rejoicings; and all because he had over his head a naked sword, hanging only by one hair, he trembled every moment lest it should fall, and nothing gave him any pleasure. How should it be with him who is threatened not

merely with temporal but with eternal death, hanging upon one little thread of life? He may drop down dead suddenly where he is; and going to bed in good health may open his eyes in hell! A servant of God used to say to this effect that he thought that in a Christian commonwealth there ought not to be more than two prisons; one that of the Holy Inquisition, the other the lunatic asylum: for either the man believes that there is a hell lasting forever for the sinner, or he does not: if he does not, let them take him to the Inquisition for a heretic; if he does believe it and nevertheless has a mind to remain in mortal sin, let them take him to the lunatic asylum; for what greater lunacy can there be than that! Doubtless, if anyone would attentively consider these things, it would be a great check upon him against sinning. That is why the devil is so diligent in trying to keep us from this meditation and consideration.

The first thing the Philistines did when they caught Sampson was to put out his eyes; and so it is the first thing that the devil contrives to do to the sinner. Now that he cannot get him to abandon the faith, he contrives that he shall believe as though he did not believe: he contrives that he shall not consider what he believes nor dwell upon it any more than as if he believed it not; he shuts his eyes, which comes to the same thing for him. As it is no use, says St. Augustine, to open your eyes if you are in the dark, since you will see nothing; so it is no use to be in the light if you keep your eyes shut, since you will see nothing that way either. This is why meditation and mental prayer are of such importance—they make you open your eyes.

CHAPTER IX

*Of One Good Result and Great Advantage That We
Should Draw from Meditation, and of the Method
to Adopt in Order to Profit Thereby*

IT is well to exercise ourselves in meditation, in affections and desires of the will; of this we shall treat presently; but it is necessary that these affections and desires be well founded on reason, because man is rational and requires to be carried by reason and by way of understanding. Thus one of the principal objects to which meditation should be ordered and directed is that we may be finally disabused and well informed as regards facts, and quite convinced and resolved in point of what it is right for us to do. They are wont to say here, when one is brought back to a good and well-ordered life: "This man is disabused." This disabusing should be one of the principal fruits that we ought to endeavor to gather from meditation. This fact should be carefully noted, since it is primary in this matter. It is at one's commencements above all that one needs to exercise oneself more particularly in this, in order to be well grounded in and thoroughly convinced of these truths.

That we may be better able to gather this result from meditation, and that it may be very fruitful, it is needful that it be not done superficially, nor at a gallop, nor in a dead-alive and feeble manner, but with much attention and tranquil consideration. You have to meditate and consider in a very leisurely way and great quiet of mind the shortness of life and the frailty and vanity of the things of the world, and how death is the end of all, that thus you may come to despise all things here below and put your whole heart in what must last forever. You have to consider and ponder many times over how vain is the esteem and opinion of men, that makes such war upon us, since it takes

nothing from you and adds nothing to you, nor can it make you either better or worse than you are, that thus you may come to despise it and not make any account of it, and so of the rest. In this way a man gradually rids himself of illusions, convinces himself and makes up his mind to do what for him is the right thing; and all this goes to make a spiritual man of him. *He shall sit in solitude and be silent, because he hath raised himself above himself* (Lam. iii. 28). He is getting a courageous heart, a contempt of all the things of the world, and is coming to say with St. Paul: *What I counted gain before, I now count as loss, something absolutely to cast out, that I may gain Christ* (Phil. iii. 8).

There is a great difference between meditating and meditating, and between knowing and knowing. A learned man knows a thing in one way, a simple and ignorant in another; the learned man knows how the thing is in truth, but the simple man knows only the outward appearance. Thus if a simple person finds a precious stone, he covets it for its luster and outward beauty and for nothing else, because he does not know its value; but a skillful jeweler, finding such a stone, covets it much, not for its luster and outward beauty, but because he knows well the value and virtue thereof. This is the difference there is between him who knows how to meditate and consider divine mysteries and spiritual things, and him who has no such knowledge; the latter takes a superficial and outside view of things, and, though they make a good impression on him by the luster and radiance that he sees in them, he is not much moved to desire them: but he who knows how to meditate and ponder these things, clears his mind of illusions and makes firm resolves. Knowing well the value of the hidden treasure and of the precious pearl which he has found, he despises all else and makes little account of it in comparison. *He went and sold all he had and bought it* (Matt. xiii. 46).

This difference is declared to us by Christ our Redeemer in the Gospel, in the story of that woman who suffered from

a flux of blood. The holy evangelists relate how the world's Redeemer was on His way to heal and raise up the daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, and such a crowd of people went with Him that they pressed on Him, when a woman caught sight of Him that had been suffering from a flux of blood now for ten years. She had spent all her money on doctors and they had been unable to cure her; rather she found herself worse than before. With the desire that she has to gain her health, she breaks through the crowd of people with great faith and confidence: *For she said within herself, If I touch but the hem and edge of his garment, I shall be healed* (Matt. ix. 21). She goes up and touches, and at once the running flow of blood dries up and stops. Christ our Redeemer turns round and says: *Who hath touched me?* St. Peter says to Him, and the other disciples: *Master, so many people are pressing on thee, and sayest thou, who hath touched me?* I do not mean that, says Christ, but *someone hath touched me*, not in the manner of the rest of people, but in a particular manner, *because I feel that virtue hath gone out from me* (Luke viii. 46). There is the point, that it is to touch Christ, and this it is that He asked about; for as for that other indiscriminate touching, as the populace and the rest of the folk touched Him, no account is to be taken of it.

This, then, is all the business of meditation, to touch Christ and His mysteries in such sort as to feel in ourselves the virtue and fruit thereof. To this end it is of great importance that we go about our meditation with great attention, ruminating and breaking up things in very leisurely fashion. That which we do not chew is neither bitter nor savory; that is why a sick man swallows his pill whole, that he may not taste the bitterness. For the same reason neither does the sinner taste the bitterness of sin or death or judgment or hell, because he swallows them whole, taking them at a gulp and all in one volley. For the same reason neither do you taste nor relish the mystery of the

Incarnation and Passion and Resurrection and the other benefits of God, because you do not break them up nor ruminate them nor ponder them as you ought. Do you chew and break up the grain of mustard seed or pepper and you will see how it burns and draws tears from the eyes.

CHAPTER X

Of Other Good Things and Advantages That There Are in Meditation

ANOTHER good thing and great advantage, says St. Thomas, that there is in meditation, is that from it there springs true devotion, a thing so important in spiritual life and so desired by all who journey that way. Devotion is nothing else than a promptitude and readiness of will for all that is good; and thus the truly devout man is he who is prompt and disposed for all good: such is the common doctrine of the saints. Now St. Thomas says there are two causes of this devotion, the one extrinsic and principal, which is God; the other intrinsic on our part, which is meditation; for this promptness and readiness of the will for the things of virtue arises from the consideration and meditation of the understanding, the understanding being that which, after the grace of God, starts and kindles this fire in our heart. Thus true devotion and fervor of spirit does not consist in the sensible sweetness and relish which some experience in prayer, but in keeping a will prompt and disposed for all points of the service of God. This is the devotion that lasts and endures; that other soon comes to an end, consisting as it does of affections of sensible devotion, coming of a sudden desire of something attractive and lovable, and being often the result of natural constitution, a soft and affectionate character and an impressionable heart. Such a one is quickly moved to sentiment and tears; and when this devotion is run out, the good purposes often dry up also. This is a sentimental

love, founded on tastes and consolations; while the taste and consolation lasts, this person will be very diligent and punctual, a lover of silence and recollection; and when the wind ceases, all is over. But take those that are founded on truth by means of meditation and consideration, convinced and disabused by reason—these are they that persevere and hold out in virtue; and even when sweetness and consolations fail them, they are still the same as before, because the cause endures, that is, the reason that convinced and moved them. This is a strong and manly love, and in it, not in sweetnesses and consolations, are seen the true servants of God and they who have made real progress. It is often said that our passions are like little dogs that go on barking, and in time of consolation have their mouths stopped: God throws to each of them his morsel of bread, which keeps them quiet, and they ask nothing; but when this bread of consolation is gone, this and that and the other one start barking, and there you see what each man is good for. They likewise compare these tastes and consolations to articles of personal property that are soon worn out, and solid virtue to landed property that is lasting and permanent, and therefore more valuable.

Hence arises a thing that we often experience, and which is worthy of consideration. We see some persons on the one hand who have great consolations in prayer, and afterwards in occasions of temptation we see them weak and even falling; and on the other hand we see others who suffer great aridities in prayer and know not what consolation or sensible sweetness is, and yet we see them very strong under temptation and far from falling. The cause is that which we have been saying, that the one were founded on tastes and feelings, while the others are founded on reason, and so remain free from illusions, convinced and firm set in truth, and thereby continue and persevere in what once they have been persuaded of and resolved upon. And so one of the methods that are usually prescribed, and a very

good one, to persevere in the good resolutions made in prayer and put them in execution, is to try to keep in mind the motive that then caused in us that good resolution and desire, because what then moved us to desire it will afterwards help us to keep and carry it out. And there is even more in it, and it is this—that by going about to undeceive and convince oneself in this way, even if one afterwards forgets the motive and reason that formerly moved him, nevertheless in virtue of that reaction against error and the resolution then taken under conviction of truth and of reason, the man stands firm and strong enough afterwards to resist temptation and persevere in virtue.

Gerson set such store by meditation that, being asked what exercise was most useful and profitable for a religious recollected in his cell, reading, or vocal prayer, or manual labor, or application to meditation, he said that, saving obedience, the best would be application to meditation. And he gives this reason, that though in vocal prayer and spiritual reading one may possibly feel for the time greater devotion and profit than in meditation, yet leaving off the book you were reading before, or in ceasing your vocal exercise, your devotion also is apt to come to an end. But meditation improves a man and disposes him better for what is to come and therefore he says that we must accustom ourselves to meditation, so that though books fail, meditation may be our book, and thus true devotion may not fail.

CHAPTER XI

Of the Conduct to Be Held in Meditation, and the Fruit to Be Gathered from It

MY heart hath grown warm within me, and in my meditation fire shall be enkindled (Psalm xxxviii. 4). In these words the Prophet David, according to the explanation of many doctors and saints, points out the method we

should observe in prayer. They explain this passage of the fire of charity and love of God and our neighbor, which the meditation of heavenly things lit and made to burn in the breast of the Royal Prophet. My heart, he says, gathered heat and was enkindled there within me. This is the effect of prayer. But how did this heat gather? How came it to be kindled there within him? Do you know how? By meditation. *And in my meditation this fire shall be enkindled.* This is the means and instrument to enkindle this fire. Thus, says St. Cyril of Alexandria, meditation is like the strokes of the steel on the flint to make fire come forth. By the exercise and meditation of the understanding you must strike blows on the hard flint of your heart until the flame bursts forth of love of God and desire of humility and mortification and the other virtues, and you must not stop until you have drawn forth and enkindled in it this fire.

Although meditation is very good and necessary, yet all our prayer must not be let go in reasonings and considerations of the understanding, nor must we stop there, for that would be rather a study than a prayer; but all the meditations and considerations that we make, we must take as means to awaken and kindle in our heart affections and desires of virtue. For the goodness and holiness of Christian and religious life does not consist in good thoughts and understanding of holy things, but in solid and true virtues and especially in the acts and operations thereof; such activity being, according to St. Thomas, the last perfection of virtue. Thus it is on this that we should principally dwell and occupy ourselves at prayer. This we must take for a first principle in this matter. Even the philosopher there in heathendom said it, and Gerson quotes him: "We go inquiring and investigating what manner of thing virtue is, not for the knowledge, but to be good and virtuous men." Though a needle is necessary to sew, yet it is not the needle that sews, but the thread; he would be very silly who spent the whole day in putting in and drawing

out a needle without thread, for that would be labor in vain; yet that is what they do whose prayer is all understanding and meditating, with little of loving. Meditation should be as the needle, which goes in first, but only goes in that through it there may go in the thread of love and affection of the will, wherewith we are to unite and conjoin ourselves to God.

Our Father warns us of this point much in particular and repeats it to us many times in the book of the Spiritual Exercises. After having set down the points which we are to meditate, with some brief reflections, he says at once: "And refer all this to myself to draw some fruit." In this lies the fruit of prayer—in each one's knowing how to apply to himself and to his own improvement what he meditates, according to his wants. The glorious Bernard says well: As the sun does not warm all to whom it gives light, so knowledge and meditation, though it teaches us what we have to do, does not move and stir the wills of all to do what it teaches. It is one thing to have knowledge of great wealth, and another thing to possess it; so he says it is one thing to know God, and another thing to fear and love God: it is not the knowing many things of God that makes us truly wise and rich, but the fearing and loving of God. He brings in also another good comparison to this effect. As a hungry man would benefit little by having set before him a table plentifully laid with exquisite dishes if he did not eat them, so it will little profit him who practises prayer to have before him a rich and splendid board of many excellent considerations if he does not eat thereof, applying them to himself by his will so as to make profit out of them.

Descending herein more into particulars, I say that what we ought to draw from meditation and prayer should be holy affections and desires, formed first interiorly in the heart, that afterwards in due time they may come out in action. The blessed St. Ambrose says that the end of meditation is action. Of those holy and mysterious living crea-

tures whom the Prophet Ezechiel saw, he says, among other particulars, that they had wings and under the wings the hands of a man, to give us to understand that the flight and play of the understanding should be subservient to action. We ought, then, to draw from prayer affections and desires of humility, disparaging ourselves and desiring to be disparaged by others—desires of suffering pains and labors for the love of God, and rejoicing in those that at present fall to our lot—affections of poverty of spirit, desiring that the worst of the house be for us and that something may be wanting to us even of necessities—grief and contrition for our sins, and firm purposes rather to fall asunder than to sin—thanksgiving for favors received—true resignation into the hands of God—and finally, desire to imitate Christ our Redeemer and Master in all the virtues that shine forth in Him. To this our meditation should be directed and ordained, and this is the fruit that we should draw from it.

Hence it follows that, since meditation and the exercise of the understanding are taken up as a means to move the will to these affections, and this is the end and purpose of the whole business, we ought to use meditation and the exercise of the understanding so far as is necessary to this end and no further, since the means should be proportionate and commensurate with the end. Thus, when we feel our will excited and moved to desire of some virtue, as to sorrow for sin, contempt of the world, love of God, desire of suffering for His sake, or the like, we should at once cut short the thread of the activity of the understanding—even as a mason removes the wooden scaffolding of arches and bridges when the masonry is set—and stop and dwell on this affection of the will till we are satisfied and have drunk it well into our soul. This is a very important direction, and our Father puts it in the book of Exercises, where he says that on the point whereon we find the devotion and feeling that we desire, we should there stop and occupy

ourselves upon it, without anxiety to pass to anything else until we are quite satisfied. As a gardener watering a seed plot, when the water begins to work its way into the earth, stops the flow of the stream and lets the water thoroughly soak and be drunk in by the bowels of the dry earth, and passes not on till it is well soaked and irrigated; so when the water of good affections and desires begins to enter into our soul, which is as earth without water, as the prophet says: *My soul, O Lord, is as earth without water before thee* (Psalm cxlii. 6), we should stop the flow of reasoning of the understanding and enjoy this irrigation and affection of the will as long as we can, until the whole heart is saturated and soaked and we can rest satisfied.

The blessed St. Chrysostom brings another comparison pat to our purpose. Have you not seen, he says, when a lambkin goes to suck the breasts of its mother, it does nothing but turn now here now there, and now sucks at the teat and then at once quits; but when the milk begins to flow, it immediately holds fast and quietly enjoys it? So in prayer, before the dew descends from heaven, man goes discoursing and reasoning from one point to another; but when the heavenly dew comes, we must at once stop and taste that sweetness and delight.

CHAPTER XII

How Important It Is to Dwell on the Acts and Affections of the Will

IT is so important to dwell and rest on the acts and affections of the will, and the saints and masters of spiritual life attach such value to this, that they say that this it is that makes a good and perfect prayer, and even what they call "contemplation," when the man no longer seeks incentives to love by meditation, but rejoices in love found and desired and rests in it as in the term of his search and desire, saying with the spouse in the Canticles: *I have*

found him whom my soul loveth, I have held him and will not let him go (Cant. iii. 4). And this is what there the same spouse says: *I sleep, but my heart watcheth* (Cant. v. 2); because in perfect prayer the understanding is, as it were, asleep, having given over reasoning and speculation, and the will is watching and melting away in love of the Spouse. And so pleased is the Bridegroom with this sleep of his spouse, that he gives orders that they are not to awaken her until she wishes. *I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the she-goats of the mountains and by the stags of the plains, that ye awaken not nor bring back to consciousness my beloved until she herself will* (Cant. iii. 5). Thus meditation and all the other parts of prayer which they assign, are ordained and directed to this contemplation, and are as it were steps whereby we are to mount to it.

So says St. Augustine in the book that he calls the "Ladder of Paradise": "Reading seeks, meditation finds, prayer petitions, but contemplation relishes and enjoys what it has sought and asked for and found"—*Lectio inquirat, meditatio inveniat, oratio postulat, contemplatio degustat*. And he quotes the saying of the Gospel: *Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you* (Matt. vii. 7). St. Augustine says: "Seek by reading, and you shall find by meditation; cry out by prayer, and it shall be opened to you by contemplation." And so the saints remark, and Albertus Magnus says it, that this is the difference between the contemplation of faithful Catholics and that of heathen philosophers—that the contemplation of philosophers is wholly directed to the perfection of the understanding by the knowledge of known truths, and so stops at the understanding, because that is its end to know and understand more and more; but the contemplation of Catholics and saints of which we now treat, does not stop at the understanding, but passes on to refresh and move the will and inflame and kindle it to the love of God, according to the

saying of the spouse: *My soul melted away when my beloved spoke* (Cant. v. 6). And St. Thomas has noted this well in treating of contemplation. He says that, though contemplation essentially lies in the understanding, yet its ultimate perfection is in the love and affection of the will. Thus the chief aim and end of our contemplation should be the affection of the will and the love of God.

Thus, says St. Augustine, Christ our Redeemer taught us in the Gospel when He said: *When ye pray, do not speak much* (Matt. vi. 7). St. Augustine says: It is one thing to speak much, and reason and conceive many things with the understanding, and another thing to dwell long on love and affections of the will. The first is a thing that we must try to get out of in prayer, consisting as it does of much speech and talk, whereas this business of prayer, says the saint, is not a business of many words. We do not deal with God in prayer by rhetoric or by abundant discourses and quips and conceits of happy thoughts and reasonings, but by tears and sighs coming from the heart, and this is according to what Prophet Jeremy says: *Let not the pupil of thine eye be silent* (Lam. ii. 18). St. Jerome says hereon: "It is the tongue that speaks; how can the pupils of the eyes speak?" He replies: "When we shed tears before God, it is then that the pupils of our eyes utter cries to God." Though we do not speak with the tongue, we can cry to God with the heart, as St. Paul says: *God hath sent the Spirit of his Son in your hearts, crying, Abba, Father* (Gal. iv. 6). And in Exodus (xiv. 15) God said to Moses: *Why dost thou cry to me?* Moses had not spoken a word, but in his heart he was praying with such fervor and efficacy that God said to him: *Why dost thou utter me these cries?* In this way we ought to utter cries to God in prayer, with our eyes—*Let not the pupil of thine eye be silent*—with tears and groans and sighs and desires of the heart.

CHAPTER XIII

*Satisfying the Complaint of Those Who Say They Are
Unable, and Have No Idea How, to Meditate and
Reason with the Understanding*

HEREIN lies the answer to a complaint very common with some, who make themselves miserable, saying that they have no ability nor any idea how to reason with themselves in prayer; no considerations occur to them whereby to enlarge and extend the points of meditation, but their thread comes to an end at once. No reason for them to afflict themselves on that account, for, as we have said, this business of prayer consists rather in desires and affections of the will than in reasonings and speculations of the understanding. Nay, the masters of spiritual life observe that it is necessary to take care not to let the meditation of the understanding run to excess, for that would much impede the motion and affection of the will, which is the main thing—and the impediment is greater, the more subtle and refined are the considerations on which one dwells. And naturally so, for in a reservoir containing only a certain measure of water, with many outlets, the more runs by one outlet, the less will run by another. Now the soul's power is finite and limited; and the more is drained off by the outlet of the understanding, the less runs by that of the will. Thus we see by experience that, when the soul is full of devotional feeling, and then the understanding strays into some speculation or curiosity, the heart at once dries up and the devotion stops; the reservoir has been dried up by that other outlet of the understanding, and so the outlet of the will is dry.

So Gerson says that hence it comes that oftentimes and very often the unlearned are the more devout, and prayer goes better with them than the learned, because they are less run away with by the understanding; they do not

occupy or distract themselves with speculations and curiosities, but proceed at once by plain and simple considerations to stimulate and move the will to affection: these humble and homely considerations have more effect on them than those high and dainty thoughts have on the others. We see this in that saintly cook of whom we spoke above (Treatise III, Chapter 8), who from the material fire that he dealt with took occasion to remember everlasting fire, and that so devoutly as to keep the gift of tears in the midst of his occupations.

And this is to be well taken notice of, that, provided the affection and desire be very high and very spiritual, it does not matter about the thought and consideration being lowly and common. We have many examples of this in Holy Writ, where the Holy Ghost conveys to us very high and lofty matter in the guise of very plain and common comparisons. On the text: *Who will give me the wings of a dove, that I may fly and rest?* (Psalm liv. 7), St. Ambrose asks why the prophet, desiring to fly and mount on high, asks for the wings of a dove and not of other birds, since there are many better flyers than the dove. He answers it is because this prophet knew very well that the wings of a dove are better apt to fly high in perfection, sustain a good flight in prayer; that is to say, the simple of heart pray better than people of acute and subtle understanding; as the text has it: *His dealing is with the simple* (Prov. iii. 32). God communicates Himself to the simple and humble of heart.

Hence there is no reason why a person should be sad or torment himself because he cannot reason or find considerations wherewith to enlarge upon the points of the meditation. Nay, they tell us, and very reasonably, that they are better off to whom God closes the vein of soaring speculation and opens the vein of affection, in order that, with the understanding tranquilized and quiet, the will may repose in God alone, occupying herself wholly in loving

and delighting in the Sovereign Good. If God does you the favor that, from some plain and simple consideration, as that God became man, that He was born in a stable, that He laid Himself on the Cross for you, you are inflamed with the love of God and with desire to be humbled and mortified for that love, and you keep to that for the whole hour and many hours, that is a more precious prayer than if you attained to many reasonings and many high and dainty reflections, because you have been occupied in the better and more substantial part of prayer, and that which is the end and fruit of it all. Hence will be understood the mistake of those who, when no reflections occur on which they can rest, think they are not making a good prayer, and that they are making a good prayer when many such reflections occur.

In the chronicles of St. Francis it is related that, one day, holy Brother Giles said to St. Bonaventure, who was Minister General of the order: "Many thanks to the Lord do you doctors owe, that you can serve and praise Him; but we ignorant and unlettered people who have no competence, what can we do to please God?" St. Bonaventure answered: "If our Lord gave no other grace to a man but that of being able to love Him, that would be enough for him to do God greater services than all other graces put together." Brother Giles said: "And can an unlettered man love our Lord Jesus Christ as much as a doctor?" "One little simple old woman," said St. Bonaventure, "can love our Lord more than a master in theology." Brother Giles at once got up in a great heat and betook himself to the part of the garden that was nearest to the city, and there with loud cries called out: "Poor little old woman, unlettered and simple, only love our Lord Jesus Christ and you may be greater than Brother Bonaventura!" Thereupon he fell into ecstasy, as was his wont, and remained rooted to the spot for three hours.

CHAPTER XIV

*Two Pieces of Advice Calculated to Aid Us Much in
Making Our Meditation Well and Drawing Fruit
Therefrom*

TO make meditation well and draw the due fruit from it, it will aid us much, in the first place, to understand, as the first principle upon which we proceed, that meditation is not an end, but a means taken towards our advancement and perfection. Thus we ought not to stop at meditation as at a terminus and final end; our perfection consists not in the enjoyment of great consolation and great sweetness of contemplation, but in attaining to a perfect mortification and victory over ourselves and our passions and appetites, bringing them back, so far as is possible, to that blessed state of original justice in which we were created, when flesh and appetite were altogether subject and conformable to reason, and reason to God; the meditation we make should be a means to arrive at this.

As the iron in the forge becomes soft with fire, so that they can work it, bend it, do what they will with it, so it should be in meditation. If we find mortification and the breaking of our own will very hard and difficult, we must have recourse to the forge of meditation and there, with the heat and fire of devotion and the example of Christ, soften our heart that we may be able to work it and mold it to all that is necessary for the greater service of God. This is the function of meditation, and this the fruit that we ought to gather therefrom; and therefore the sweetnesses and consolations which the Lord is wont to give therein are not for us to rest in them, but to make us run more readily and nimbly in the way of virtue and perfection.

This the Holy Ghost would give us to understand by what happened to Moses, descending from the mountain

where he had conversed with God. The sacred text says that, coming from thence, his face was resplendent with the rays of light, and this light took the shape of horns, in which the strength of animals is wont to dwell; showing us that we ought to gather from prayer strength and vigor for well-doing. Christ our Redeemer taught us the same thing by His example, on the night before His Passion putting Himself in prayer once, twice, and thrice, to prepare Himself for the suffering that was now so near; not that He had need of it, as St. Ambrose observes, but to give us an example. The holy Gospel (Luke xxii. 43) says that there appeared to Him there an angel comforting Him, and He came forth from His prayer so comforted that He said to His disciples: *Arise, let us go to meet our enemies, for now he draws nigh who is to give me up* (Matt. xxvi. 46). And He Himself offers and gives Himself up into their hands: *He was offered, because himself willed it* (Isaias liii. 7). All this to teach us that we ought to take prayer as a remedy to overcome the difficulties that meet us on the way of virtue.

St. Chrysostom says that prayer is an attuning of the lyre of our heart to make sweet music to God. Thus we go to meditation to tune our heart, to bring to harmony the chords of our passions and affections and all our actions, that all may accord with reason and with God. This is what every day we say or hear said in spiritual conferences and exhortations, that our meditation should be a practical meditation, that is to say, directed to action, since it has to serve to smooth down the difficulties and overcome the repugnances that present themselves in the way of spirit. Therefore the Holy Ghost calls it prudence: *The science of the saints is prudence* (Prov. ix. 10); because prudence is directed to action, differing from the science of the learned, which is only to know. Thus the saints say that prayer is a general and most efficacious remedy for all our temptations and for all sorts of necessities and occa-

sions that may come in our way; and one of the principal praises of prayer is this.

Theodoret, in his Religious History, tells of a holy monk who was wont to say that physicians ordinarily treat each corporal disease with a particular and proper remedy, and frequently apply many remedies to the cure of one disease, because all remedies fall short and have only a limited virtue in them; but prayer is a universal remedy and is very efficacious in all our necessities, to repel and resist the attacks of the devil and to gain all sorts of virtues, because it applies to the soul an infinite good, which is God Himself, on Whom it rests for support. They also call prayer omnipotent; prayer alone, they say, can do all things. And Christ our Redeemer gives us this remedy of prayer against all temptations: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41).

The second advice is that, before we put ourselves in meditation, we should have fixed beforehand the points upon which we are to meditate, as also the fruit we are to gather therefrom. But some may say: "How shall we know beforehand what fruit to draw from the meditation we are about to make? Please tell us that?" Certainly I will. Have I not just now said that, when we have recourse to meditation, it is to find out a remedy for our spiritual infirmities and to gain the victory over ourselves and over our passions and bad habits; and that meditation is a means whereby we help ourselves for the amendment and reformation of our lives? This being so, we must consider for some time before we begin our meditation and ask ourselves, what is the greatest spiritual necessity I have? What is it that most hinders my progress in virtue and makes most war on my soul? This is what I must bring ready thought of, and hold before my eyes to insist on it, and draw from meditation a remedy for it. Let us take an example. I feel in myself a great inclination to be held in honor and esteem and to have much notice taken of me;

and that considerations of what men will think about me take a great hold of me; and when occasion offers of my being made small account of, I am troubled and feel it much, and haply sometimes I show it. This, I think, it is that makes most war upon me, hinders my advancement and the peace and tranquillity of my soul, and makes me fall into my greatest faults. This, then, being your greatest need, your cure consists in overcoming and rooting this tendency out, and that is what you should bring ready prepared and keep before your eyes and take it to heart, to gather this good from your meditation.

Thus it is a mistake to make a practice of going to meditation to take what luck you find and pick up there anything that offers, like a sportsman who fires at random to hit where he may hit and let come of it what will come—leaving what is most necessary. The sick man who goes to the dispensary does not take the first drug that comes to hand, but what he needs for his ailment. Here is a man full of pride even to the depth of his heart; another of impatience, another of self-opinionatedness and self-will, as is clearly seen whenever occasion offers—in fact he is taken red-handed in the fault every day—and the fellow goes to meditation to pick flowers and quips and conceits, laying hold of the first that comes and is most to his taste, picking now this and now that. That is not the way to get on. One should always take account of one's greatest need and contrive something to meet that, since it is for that that one goes to meditation.

St. Ephrem alleges to this purpose the example of the blind man in the Gospel, who approached Christ with loud cries that He should have mercy on him. Christ asked him what it was that he would have Him do for him. He at once represented his greatest necessity and that which gave him most trouble, which was his loss of sight, and asked for a remedy for that. *Lord, that I may see* (Luke xviii. 41). Do you think that he asked for any other of those

things of which in good sooth he stood in need? Do you think he said: "Lord, give me a garment, because I am poor?" He does not ask for that, but, leaving all the rest aside, he comes to his greatest necessity. So then, says the saint, we should do in prayer; we should come to our greatest necessity, and insist and persevere in that until we get what we want. That there may be no excuse or demur in this matter, it is well to observe that, though in truth, when one goes to meditation, one should aim at gathering from thence desires of the particular virtues that are wanting to him, and ordinarily take care that the points and matter taken for meditation be suitable and proportionate thereto—to the end that the will may be moved more readily and with greater firmness and fervor to those desires, and so gather more easily the desired fruit—yet it is also needful for us to understand that any exercise or mystery that we meditate may be applied to that necessary purpose. Prayer is like the manna from heaven, in which everyone found the flavor that he desired: if you desire the flavor of humility, the consideration of your sins and of the death and Passion of Christ and of the benefits you have received from God, will yield that flavor; if you desire grief and shame for your sins, any of those subjects will yield that flavor; if you desire patience, you will find that flavor also, and so of the rest.

CHAPTER XV

*How It Is to Be Understood That in Meditation We
Should Take to Heart One Thing, That of Which
We Have Greatest Need, and Insist Thereon
Until We Get It*

WE do not mean by this to say that we should always have our mind fixed on one thing in meditation. Though humility, or something of that sort, be our greatest need, still we may well occupy ourselves at meditation

in the acts and exercise of the other virtues. There strikes you an act of conformity to the will of God for whatever He shall wish and arrange to make of you: dwell on that as long as you can; it will be a very good prayer and time well spent, and will not blunt your lance for humility, but rather sharpen it. There strikes you an act of gratitude and hearty recognition of all the benefits you have received from God, as well general as particular: dwell on that as long as you can: it is very reasonable every day to return God thanks for benefits received, and especially for that of our having been brought into religion. There strikes you a great horror and sorrow for your sins and a firm purpose to die a thousand deaths rather than offend God; dwell thereon, for it is one of the best and most profitable acts you could make in prayer. There strikes you a great love of God, a great zeal and desire for the salvation of souls, and of offering yourself to any labor whatever for their sake. Dwell thereon. We may also dwell on asking favors of God as well for ourselves as for our nearest and dearest, and for the whole Church, which is a part and a very principal part of prayer. On all these things and the like we may dwell at prayer, and it will be a very good prayer. Thus the Psalms, which are a very perfect prayer, we see are full of an infinity of different affections. Therefore Cassian said, and the Abbot Nilus, that prayer is a field full of flowers, or as a wreath woven of many various sweet-smelling herbs. *The odor of my son is as the odor of a full field which the Lord hath blessed* (Gen. xxvii. 27). There is another advantage in this variety, that it is apt to aid us and render our prayer the easier, so that we can stay and persevere in it the longer, since to be always repeating one and the same thing is apt to cause weariness, whereas variety delights and entertains.

What we mean to say is that it is very important for our spiritual advancement to take for some time one thing, and that should be the thing that we feel most needful for our

soul. On this we should principally dwell at meditation, asking it much of our Lord and stirring ourselves to acts upon it once and again, one day and another, one month and another, and this should be our principal concern, and this we should keep ever before our eyes and have it fixed in our heart. This is the way in which business is done here in this life. Hence the saying: "God keep me from the man of one business."

The glorious St. Thomas, treating of prayer, says that desire is greater and more effectual, the more it is reduced to one thing; and he cites the saying of the prophet: *One thing I have asked of the Lord, for this I will entreat and aim ever until I attain it* (Psalm xxvi. 4). He who aims at knowing any science or art well, does not start learning one one day and another another, but he goes on for some time until he compasses it. So also he who aims at compassing any virtue does well to exercise himself for some time chiefly in that virtue, directing his meditation and all his spiritual duties to the gaining of it. This especially since, according to the doctrine of St. Thomas, all the virtues are connected together; that is to say, they are united and dovetailed into one another in such fashion that he who has one of them perfectly will have them all. Thus, if you gain true humility, you will gain therewith all the virtues. Uproot from all your heart pride and plant therein a most profound humility; if you have that, you will have great obedience and great patience; you will complain of nothing, any labor will seem to you little enough, all will seem to you very easy in comparison with what you deserve; you will have much charity for your brothers because you will hold them all to be good and yourself only wicked; you will have much simplicity and not judge anyone because you will have such a sense of your own defects as not to mind those of others, and so we might run through the rest of the virtues.

To this end it is a very good plan to apply the particular examen to the same point as meditation and make the two conjointly, for in this way all our exercises tending in one direction, much profit is made. Cassian goes further. Not only at time of examen and set meditation would he have us insist on that of which we stand in greatest need, but many times during the day we should lift up our spirit to God in ejaculatory prayers, with sighs and groans from the heart; and he would have us add penances besides, and mortifications and special devotions for this end, as we shall say elsewhere more at large. For if this be my greatest need, if this is the vice or passion or evil inclination that reigns most in me and makes me fall into most faults; if on the rooting out and vanquishing of this vice and gaining this virtue, then, depends the vanquishing and rooting out of all vices and the gaining of all virtues, whatever labor and diligence is spent on it will be well employed.

St. Chrysostom says that prayer is like a fountain in the midst of a garden or orchard, inasmuch as away from it everything is dry, and by it everything is green, fresh, and fair. All depends on using this fountain of prayer for watering; this it is that must ever keep all the plants of virtues in their bloom and beauty—obedience, patience, humility, mortification, silence, and recollection. But as in an orchard or garden there is wont to be some tree or floweret more dainty and cherished, to which the watering is chiefly applied, and though water run short for the rest it must never run short for this; so it should be in the garden and orchard of our soul—everything must be done to water and preserve it by the irrigation of prayer. You must always keep an eye on one main thing, which is that of which you stand in greatest need; to this you must chiefly apply yourself, for this you must never fail to find time. And as in going out of the garden you put your hand on the flower that pleases you most, cut it and go out of the garden with it, so in prayer you must lay your hand on

what you find most necessary, and that you must take out of it.

This is a sufficient answer to the usual question, whether it is good to gather fruit at prayer in conformity with the exercise that makes the matter of meditation. We have said that, though one should always take account of what one finds most necessary, yet it is also good to exercise oneself and elicit affections and acts conformable to the mystery meditated. But here we must notice a very important point touching these acts and affections that we form at meditation bearing upon virtues that present themselves in accordance with the things meditated: they must not be done superficially, nor at a racing pace, but in very leisurely style, dwelling on them with long pauses and great restfulness, until we are satisfied and feel that that truth is fixed and sunk into our hearts, even though it take the whole hour to do so. One act and affection of this sort, kept up in this manner, is worth more than many acts of various virtues done and got through at top speed.

One of the reasons why some people make not so much profit out of prayer is that they go at a racing pace through acts of virtues; they go skipping and flying from one thing to another. Here comes a happy thought of an act of humility, and they make an act of humility, and forthwith pass on; there comes the thought of an act of obedience, and they make an act of obedience, forthwith another of patience; and so they go at a run like a cat over hot coals, so that, though there were fire under their feet, they would not burn. The consequence is that, when they come out of meditation, everything is forgotten and at an end and they remain as tepid and unmortified as before.

Father Master Avila reprehends those who, when they are on one subject and another occurs, at once leave that and pass to the other. He says that this is a usual artifice of the devil, to the end that, jumping from one branch to another like a magpie, they may lose the fruit of their

meditation. It is very important that we should dwell on affections and desires of virtue until they soak in and find thorough entrance into our soul. Thus, if you wish to elicit acts of contrition and sorrow for your sins, you must dwell thereon until you feel in yourself a great horror and abhorrence of sin, according to the saying of the prophet: *I have abhorred iniquity and abominated it* (Psalm cxviii. 163). This will make you come forth with firm purposes to die a thousand deaths rather than commit one mortal sin.

Thus St. Augustine well observes that for the horror that men have of certain sins, as blasphemy or parricide, they do not fall into them except on rare occasions. Of other sins he says on the contrary that by practice they come to be made small account of; by custom men have lost by this time their fear and horror of them, and so they fall easily into them. In like manner, if you wish to elicit acts and exercise yourself in humility, you must dwell on that affection and desire of being despised and made little account of until this affection and desire comes to soak in and gain full entry into your soul, and all the fumes and spirits of pride and haughtiness fall away and come to an end, and you feel yourself moved to be despised and depreciated; and so of the rest of affections and acts of other virtues. Hence it will be seen what a help it will be to our advancement to take to heart one thing, and insist and persevere in that as we have said. If there be deep-seated in us the affection and desire of being despised and made small account of, or any other similar affections, and we hold to that an hour in the morning and another hour in the evening, and the same the day after that, and the day after, it is clear that quite another effect will be produced in our heart, and the virtue will remain stamped and soak down into our heart in quite another manner than if we had gone over it at a gallop.

St. Chrysostom says that, as one rainy day or one irrigation is not enough for the lands, however good they are,

but many such rainy days and many waterings are needed, so also many irrigations of prayer are needed for our soul to be saturated and soaked through with virtue; and he quotes to this effect the saying of the prophet: *Seven times in the day I praised thee* (Psalm cxviii. 164). Seven times a day did the Prophet David water his soul with the water of prayer, and dwelt on one and the same aspiration, repeating it many times, as we see frequently in the Psalms. In one psalm alone he repeats twenty-seven times, *For his mercy endureth forever* (Psalm cxxv. 1-27), proclaiming and giving thanks for the mercy of God. In another psalm, which consists of only five verses, he eleven times rouses and invites us to praise God (Psalm cl). And Christ our Redeemer taught us also by His example this method of prayer and perseverance in one thing in His prayer in the Garden. Not content with having once made this prayer to His eternal Father, He went back upon it and repeated a second and a third time the same prayer, *eundem sermonem dicens* (Matt. xxvi. 44), and at the end, says the holy Gospel, at greater length than at the beginning. He dwelt more on this prayer, *prolixius orabat* (Luke xxii. 43), to teach us to insist and persevere in prayer on one thing, backwards and forwards again and again; for in this way and by this perseverance we shall come to attain the virtue and perfection which we desire.

CHAPTER XVI

How We May Dwell Long in Meditation on One and the Same Thing; and a Very Profitable, Practical Method of Meditation by Descending to Particular Cases

IT remains for us to describe the method which we shall be able to use in order to continue a long time aspiring after the same virtue, since it is so important, as we have said. The common and ordinary means usually given for this is to endeavor to continue the same act and affection

of the will, or return to reiterating and repeating it anew, as one gives a new tap to a hoop that it may not stop running or as one flings fresh fuel into the furnace, aiding ourselves to this end by the same first reflection that originally moved us to this affection and desire, repeatedly rousing the will therewith when we see that it is growing cold, saying with the prophet: *Turn thou, my soul, unto thy rest, since the Lord hath blessed thee* (Psalm cxiv. 7). Awake, my soul, and turn to thy repose; see how much thou art concerned in this, and how right and reasonable that thou shouldst do much for the Lord, to Whom thou owest so much. When the first consideration no longer suffices to move us, we must make use of another new consideration or pass on to another point. For this we should always bring different points ready prepared, so that when we have finished one which seems no longer to make any impression on us, we may pass to another and another that may move us afresh and prompt our aspirations to what we desire.

Furthermore, as here on earth, to avoid the repugnance that may be caused by continuing again and again the same dish, we are wont to dress it in different manners till it seems new and gives us a new appetite, so also to persevere a long time on one and the same thing in prayer, which is the food and sustenance of our soul, it is a good plan to dress it in different ways. This we can do sometimes by passing to another point and another consideration, as we just now explained; for every time that a person moves and actuates himself by a different motive or consideration on the same thing, it is like dressing the dish in another manner, and so it becomes as it were new. And even without any new motive or new consideration, the aspiration after the same virtue may be dressed in many ways. Thus, in dealing with humility a person may sometimes dwell on his self-knowledge of his own miseries and weaknesses, rousing shame and self-abasement for them; at other times he may

dwell on desires to be despised and held in small account by others, making no account of the opinion and esteem of men, but taking it all for vanity; at other times he may be ashamed and blush to see the faults that every day he heaps up, and beg of God pardon and remedy for them; at other times he may return thanks that he has not been left to fall in other and graver matters. By this variation and difference we escape the loathing that is often caused by continuance of the same thing and are able readily and with relish to last out and persevere in exciting affections of one and the same virtue, whereby the virtue takes root and gets a better hold on the heart. For as every time the file passes over the iron, it takes off something, so every time we make an act of humility or of any other virtue, something of the contrary vice is worn away and got rid of.

Besides this, there is another way of persevering in meditation on one subject for many days—a very easy and profitable way; and that is by coming down to particular cases. The masters of spiritual life here observe that we must not be satisfied with drawing from meditation a general desire or purpose of serving God or of advancing and being perfect in general, but we must come down to that in which we know that we shall be able to serve and please God better. Neither must we be content with eliciting a general desire of any particular virtue, as to be humble, obedient, patient, or mortified—for this desire or velleity of virtue even vicious people have, since virtue is a fair and honorable thing, of much profit both for this life and the next. It is easy enough to love and desire it in general, but in whatever virtue we desire, we must come down to particular cases. Thus, if we wish to attain a great conformity to the will of God, we must come down and conform ourselves to His will in particular cases: as in health, so in sickness; as in life, so in death; as in consolation, so in temptation. If we aim at attaining the virtue of humility, we must come down to the particular, imagining particular

cases, likely or possible to turn up, of our being despised and losing caste; and so of other virtues; for these occasions are more felt, and in them the difficulty of virtue lies; here virtue is proved and made to appear, and these are the means to gain it.

Our first instances should be taken from lesser and easier things; thence we may go on to things more difficult, things that we should feel more if they did occur. Thus we should go on and face them little by little, eliciting acts thereupon as if they were actually present till we find no obstacle in the virtue we are after, but have courage for everything, and the field is won. And when actual occasions present themselves, in these we should exercise ourselves first of all, disposing ourselves to bear them courageously and with profit, each according to his condition. A servant of God adds that in meditation we should always put before us something to do that very day; so far even as this do they wish us to descend to particulars in our meditation. This is one of the most profitable exercises that we can go through in meditation; for, as we have said, our meditation ought to be practical, or directed to action, to gain the virtue we desire and overcome all repugnances thereto. This is what soldiers do, who, before war, are wont to engage in jousts, tournaments, skirmishes, and the like exercises to be prepared and skillful for real war.

Cassian greatly commends this practice; so also do Plutarch and Seneca. They say it is very profitable to have your mind always engaged on the thought of trials and troubles; for as he who will think of nothing but pleasant eventualities weakens himself and has no staying-power and is quite upset when disagreeable things befall him, and turns to think of other things pleasant and agreeable; so he who is accustomed ever to be picturing to himself sicknesses, exiles, prisons, and all other adversities that can happen, will be more ready and wide-awake when they do come, and will find that such things strike more terror in

the beginning than they do harm in the end. St. Gregory says well: "The missiles that are foreseen hit you less." A blow does not hurt you so much when you were expecting it, and in thought had half got it down already, as when it catches you suddenly. It is clear that enemies frighten you more when they spring upon you suddenly than when you were on the lookout for them.

In the Life of our blessed Father Ignatius we read a marvelous example to this effect. One day that he was unwell, the doctor told him not to give way to sadness or any gloomy thoughts. Thereupon he began to think attentively within himself what occurrence could possibly happen to him so disagreeable and hard as to affect the peace and tranquillity of his soul; and having turned the eyes of his reflection over many things, one thing alone presented itself that he would most take to heart, and that was if by any chance our Society were broken up. He went on reflecting how long this affliction and pain would last, in case it happened; and he thought that, if it happened without any fault on his part, within one quarter of an hour of recollection and prayer he would be rid from that grief and recover his ordinary peace and cheerfulness, although the Society were dissolved like salt in water. This is a very good and very profitable prayer.

The Apostle St. James says in his canonical epistle: *Is anyone sad among you? Let him pray* (James v. 13). When you feel any sadness or discouragement, have recourse to prayer and you will find there comfort and remedy. This is what the Prophet David did: *My soul refused to be comforted: I had recourse to God, and I found comfort* (Psalm lxxvi. 3-4). When he felt himself destitute of comfort, he had recourse to God and raised his heart to Him, and forthwith his soul was filled with joy and consolation: "This is the will of God; He wills it so. If God is satisfied, we are all satisfied." As after the coming of the occasion and the distress it is a very good remedy to

have recourse to prayer in order to bear it well and with advantage, so also it is very important to take this remedy by anticipation beforehand, so that the trouble may not afterwards strike us as something new, but as something easy and bearable.

St. Chrysostom says that one of the reasons why holy Job was so brave and constant in his adversities and afflictions was because he had anticipated them in the manner we have said, thinking of them beforehand and presenting them to his imagination and rousing himself to meet them as something that might well happen, as he himself says: *The fear that I feared hath befallen me, and what I was afraid of hath come true.* But if you are not fortified beforehand on this point and if even in desire you feel difficulty, what will it be in act? If, when you are at prayer and far from the occasion, you do not feel courage and strength to embrace this office or that practice or that hardship and affront, what will it be when you are away from prayer and confronted by the difficulty of the occasion and the work, and without the consideration and meditation of the example of Christ supporting and animating you? You much desired something at prayer, and afterwards when the occasion offered, you broke down; what would it have been if you had not anticipated it, and even at prayer had had no desire of it? "If he who makes resolutions often fails, what shall become of him who rarely or never makes any resolution?" (A Kempis.)

Herein we present abundant matter to enable one to last out and persevere in meditation on one subject and in the same affection many hours and many days, since the particular occasions that may offer and to which we may descend are countless, and there is much to do to bring yourself to face them all. And when you have come to that pitch that you fancy you feel in yourself courage and strength for everything, think not that all the work is done, but rather there is a long way to go, since there is a

great gap between word and deed and between desire and execution. It is plain that execution is harder than desire, for in practice the object in present, but in desire, only the imagination. Thus it often befalls us that we are very fervent in prayer and fancy that there is no obstacle in our way, and afterwards, when the occasion offers, we find ourselves very far from what we thought.

Thus it is not enough that you feel in yourself those desires, but you must manage to make those desires so strong and so effectual as to reach to execution, for that is the proof of virtue. And if you see that your performances agree not with your desires, but that, when the occasion offers, you find yourself other than at meditation you thought you were, be confounded to think that your whole being goes out in desires; or to say better, that they cannot be true desires, but delusions and imaginations, since a very slight thing troubles and upsets you and makes you turn back. And as the smith, when the work does not turn out well, puts it back a second time into the fire to forge it anew, so you must go back to the furnace of meditation to forge those desires better, and stop not till the work agrees well with the desire and there is no fault to find with it.

But even when you have come to this, that you seem to take up well the occasions that offer, think not that the whole work is done; for in the same work there are many degrees and steps to mount, to reach the perfection of virtue. For the first degree it is necessary to practise yourself in taking up with patience all the occasions that offer. This is the first degree of virtue; suffer with patience, if you cannot with joy; and in this you will find enough to occupy your intention for some days, and even a good many. And when you have got so far as to suffer with patience all the occasions that offer, you have still a long way to go to arrive at the perfection of virtue; for, as philosophers say, the sign of one's having gained the perfection of vir-

tue is when one does the works thereof with promptitude, facility, and delight. See, then, whether you do the works of the virtue of humility, of poverty, of patience, and of the other virtues, with promptitude, facility, and delight; and thereby you will see if you have gained the virtue. See whether you rejoice as much under contempt and dishonor as worldly people do under honor and marks of respect, which is the rule laid down for us by our holy Father, drawn from the Gospel. See if you relish and rejoice in poverty of food and clothing and lodging, and in the worst things' in the house being given you, as much as the covetous man in riches and abundance. See whether you rejoice in mortification and suffering as much as people of the world in ease and comfort. If we are to attain to this perfection in every virtue, we shall have plenty to think about, even over one virtue, for many days and perhaps years.

CHAPTER XVII

*That in the Consideration of the Divine Mysteries We
Should Also Proceed Leisurely, and Not Pass Over
Them Superficially; and of Some Means to
Help Us to Do This*

IN the consideration of the divine mysteries it is again very important to dig deep in one subject and not pass over things hurriedly; for one mystery, well considered and pondered, will do us more good than many superficially glanced at. To this end our Father, in the book of Spiritual Exercises, makes so much account of repetitions, that for every exercise he further bids us make one or two repetitions thereof; thus what is not found the first time over is found by further perseverance: *He that seeketh findeth, and the door shall be opened to him that knocketh* (Matt. vii. 8). Moses struck the rock with his rod, and

no water came; he struck a second time, and there was a flow of water (Num. xx. 11). Take the case of that blind man in the Gospel; Christ our Redeemer did not cure him all at once, but wrought the cure little by little. First He put spittle on his eyes and asked him if he saw anything. He said he saw certain shapes, but did not know what they were: *I see men walking like trees* (Mark viii. 24). He took the men for trees. The Lord then proceeded to put His hands on his eyes and healed him entirely, so that he saw clearly and distinctly. So it is wont to happen in meditation, that by returning once and again to the same subject and persevering in it, one comes to find out more. Even so when one enters a dark room; to start with, one sees nothing, but comes to see something by staying there. And in particular we must take care always to dwell on the consideration of things until we are quite disabused of error and penetrated with truth, and convinced, and resolved to do the right thing, for this is one of the chief fruits that we have to draw from meditation, and we need to be well grounded in it.

Now to come to the means that will help us to consider and ponder the mysteries in this manner, when the Lord sends His divine light and opens the eyes of the soul, she finds so much to consider and so much to dwell upon that she can say with the prophet: *Rouse mine eyes from slumber, O Lord, and I will consider the marvels of thy law* (Psalm cxviii. 18). *I will rejoice over thy works, as one who findeth much spoil* (Psalm cxviii. 162). The second passage explains the first. I will rejoice in the abundance of mysteries and marvels that I have found in Thy law, as one rejoices who finds much booty after gaining a victory.

The blessed St. Francis and St. Augustine spent whole days and nights over those two short ejaculations: "Who art Thou and who am I? May I know myself and may I know Thee, my God and my all!" This is a method of prayer very akin to that which the Prophet Isaias says the

citizens of heaven observe, who, wrapt in contemplation of the Divine Majesty, are perpetually singing, saying, and repeating, *Holy, holy, holy* (Isaias vi. 3). St. John the Evangelist says the same, speaking of those mysterious living creatures who stood before the throne of God: *And they rested not either day or night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God omnipotent, who was and who is and who is to come* (Apoc. iv. 8).

But to arrive at this, it is necessary that we ourselves should do our part, accustoming ourselves to dwell on the mysteries, pondering and sounding the depths of their particular details, and that we should practise ourselves much in this. Gerson says that one of the chief means that we can apply, and one that will help much to enable us to make this meditation well, will be to exercise ourselves continually upon it. It is not a business that is taught by rhetorical phrases, or can be learned by the hearing of many discourses or the reading of many treatises on prayer, but only by putting our hand to the work and exercising ourselves much therein. When a mother goes about teaching her son to walk, she does not spend an hour in giving him instructions on the method he must observe in walking, telling him to move his feet now one way now another, but she makes him walk, and in that way the child finds out and comes to know how to do it. This, then, must be the method whereby we are to learn this science. And though it is true that to obtain the gift of prayer or of anything else supernatural, no exercise of our own is sufficient, but it must come from the gracious and liberal hand of the Lord—*For the Lord giveth wisdom, and from his mouth proceedeth prudence and knowledge* (Prov. ii. 6); yet His Majesty wishes that we should exercise ourselves therein as though we had to attain it by this means alone; for *he disposeth all things sweetly, and reacheth from end to end strongly* (Wisdom viii. 1). And so He disposes the works of grace conformably to those of nature; and as

other sciences and arts are attained by practice, so He wishes to teach us this science also in that manner. By fiddling one learns to fiddle; by walking one learns to walk; and by praying one learns to pray.

Gerson says that the reason why there are so few contemplatives today is for want of this exercise. Of old, as we see, there were in those monasteries of monks ever so many men of high prayer and contemplation, and nowadays you will scarcely find one man of prayer; and when one speaks of contemplation, it sounds like talking Arabic or metaphysics—one of those things that nobody understands. The reason of this, he says, is that formerly those holy monks practised much prayer themselves, and when youths entered the monasteries, they at once imposed this duty on them and exercised them much in it, as we read in the Rule of St. Pacomius and other monastic fathers. So Gerson counsels what he takes to be very important for the good of monasteries, that they should have spiritual men, learned and well versed in prayer, who, when youths enter the monasteries, should at once from the first instruct them in the exercise of prayer. And our Father took this advice so seriously and left it so strongly inculcated in his Constitutions, that not only in the beginning, in the houses of probation, he would have someone to instruct newcomers therein, but in all the colleges and houses of the Society he would have appointed a prefect of spiritual things to attend to this and see how everyone got on in prayer, for the great importance that he attached to it.

Another thing, also, that will help us much to continue this exercise of prayer and persevere much in it, is to have a great love of God and spiritual things. So spoke the Royal Prophet: *How I love, O Lord, thy law: all day long it is matter of my meditation* (Psalm cxviii. 97). I am never wearied of thinking of it day and night; it is all my delight and recreation; *and I recreated myself over thy commandments, which I loved* (Psalm cxviii. 47). If we had

a great love of God, we should willingly think of Him days and nights and never want matter of thought. Oh, how willingly does a mother think of a son whom she tenderly loves! How little need has she of arguments and considerations to refresh herself in the memory of him! In speaking of him her heart is at once touched and tears start from her eyes, without further arguments or considerations. Begin to speak to a widow of her deceased husband, whom she dearly loved, and you will see how she begins at once to sigh and weep. Now if natural love can do this—and why do I speak of natural love? If the frantic love of one who is over head and ears in his passion often keeps him so absorbed and swallowed up, as we see, in the object of his passion, that seemingly he can think of nothing else—how much more shall the supernatural love of the infinite beauty and goodness of God be able to do, since grace is more powerful than nature and perversity! If God were all our treasure, our heart would at once go out to Him; *for where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also* (Matt. vi. 21). Everyone willingly thinks of that which he loves and in which he takes delight: therefore Holy Scripture says: *He tasted and saw* (I Kings xiv. 27; Prov. xxxi. 18): *Taste and see that the Lord is sweet* (Psalm xxxiii. 9). Tasting goes before seeing, and seeing gives increase of yearning and love. So says St. Thomas, treating of this matter, that “contemplation is the daughter of love,” because from loving God one is moved to think of and contemplate Him; and the more one looks and contemplates, the more one loves, because good things looked upon invite us to love them; and the more we delight in going on looking and loving.

CHAPTER XVIII

Showing in Practice How It Is in Our Power Always to Make a Good Meditation and Gather Fruit from It

THE very special and extraordinary prayer of which we spoke above is a very particular gift of God, which He gives not to all, but to whom He pleases; but as for that ordinary and plain mental prayer of which we are treating now, God refuses it to none. Some make the mistake of thinking that, because they cannot attain to that high prayer and contemplation, they cannot pray at all and are not made for it; whereas the other and lower is a very good and profitable prayer and by it we can attain to perfection. Of this, then, we will now speak, since with the grace of the Lord it is in our power always to make it well and draw fruit from it, which is a very consoling fact.

By two ways we may gather this conclusion very well from what has been said. In the first way, because this method of prayer that our Father teaches us is to exercise therein the three powers of our soul, putting with the memory before the eyes of the understanding the point or mystery on which we wish to meditate, and thereupon setting to work with the understanding, reasoning, meditating, and considering those things which will better help to move our will; whereupon must follow our affections and desires of the will; and this last is the principal fruit that we should draw from meditation. Thus meditation does not consist in those sweetnesss and sensible relishes that we sometimes feel and experience, but in the acts that we make with the powers of our soul. Now to make these acts is always in our power, however dry and disconsolate we may be. For though I be drier than a stick and harder than a stone, it is in my power with the favor of the Lord to make an act of abhorrence and grief for my sins, an act of the love of God, an act of patience and an act of humility, an act

of desire to be contemned and slighted in imitation of Christ, Who was contemned and slighted for me. We must allow that this affair of making a good meditation and drawing fruit from it does not consist in eliciting these acts with relish and sensible consolation, nor in feeling much what one does; not in this does the goodness and perfection of those acts consist, nor the merit of them. And this is to be noted, because many are much mistaken who are heartbroken, thinking they can make nothing of meditation because they do not feel all the sorrow for their faults and sins or all the aspiration after virtue and desire of it that they could wish. These feelings belong to the sensitive appetite; the will is a spiritual power and independent of that; thus it is not necessary to feel one's acts in this manner, but it is enough to seek it with the will.

So all divines and saints, dealing with contrition and sorrow for sin, advise penitents who are disconsolate because, taking into account the gravity of mortal sin, they cannot burst out into tears nor feel in themselves that sensible grief that they would have wished, so that their very hearts should have broken with grief. They tell them, true contrition and sorrow for sin is not in the sensitive appetite, but in the will. Be grieved for your having sinned because it is an offense against God, worthy of being loved above all things, for that is true contrition. As for that feeling, when the Lord gives it, receive it gratefully; and when He does not, be not distressed, for it is not that that God asks of us. Clearly He cannot ask of you what is not in our power. Now this feeling that you would like to have is a taste of sensible devotion which is not in our power; and thus God does not ask it of us, but only what is in our power, which is grief of the will, a thing quite independent of that feeling. And the same with acts of love of God; love God with your will above all things, for this is a strong and appreciative love, and what God asks of us; that other is a love of tenderness, which is not in our power. The

same with acts of other virtues and all the good purposes that we form.

This truth may be well seen by what is true on a contrary supposition; for it is certain that if a man with his will embraces and consents to a mortal sin, he will certainly sin mortally and go to hell for it, even though he have no feeling nor sensible relish for it whatsoever. Therefore, when a man embraces what is good, though he have no feeling nor sensible relish in the matter, he will please God and merit heaven, especially as God is more ready to reward than to punish. Nay, oftentimes these acts are more meritorious and pleasing to God when they are done in dryness without taste of sensible consolation, because they are purer and stronger and more lasting, and a man puts more of his own into them then than when he is carried off his feet by devotion. Thus it is a sign of a more solid virtue and of a will firmer in the service of God, for whoever makes these acts without these side aids of spiritual delights and consolations, what would he do were such aids at hand to him? Father Master Avila says very well: "The one is carried in arms like a baby; the other walks on his own feet like a grown-up person." Blossius says that such persons are like men who serve a master at their own cost. It is very important that we should accustom ourselves to make our meditation in this manner, because the more ordinary course of meditation with many is apt to be dryness; these others are extraordinary comforts. As those who voyage on the high seas in galleys do it by force of their arms in rowing, when the wind drops; so those who seek to practise meditation, when the fair wind of lights and consolations from the Lord drops, must contrive to carry on their voyage by the oars of their own faculties, helped by the favor of the Holy Ghost, though it be not so copious and superabundant.

Secondly, we may draw this conclusion in another way. Meditation, as we have said, is not an end, but a means to

our spiritual progress and our gaining the victory over our passions and bad inclinations, and so smoothing the way and removing obstacles that we may give ourselves over entirely to God. When the scales fell from the eyes of St. Paul's soul with that light from heaven and that divine voice, *I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest* (Acts ix. 5), what a changed man he was, how convinced, how resolved and given over to do the will of God! *Lord*, he cried, *what wouldst thou have me to do?* That is the fruit of a good meditation. And we were saying that we must not be content with drawing from meditation general purposes and desires, but we must descend in particular to that of which we have most need, and prepare ourselves and be on the lookout to surmount well the occasions that may present themselves that day, and go our way with all edification.

To apply this to our purpose, by the grace of the Lord this is always in our power; it rests with us always to put a hand to what we have the greatest need of. Put one hand to humility, another to patience, another to obedience, another to mortification and resignation; and take care always to come out of meditation very humbly, very resigned and indifferent, very desirous to mortify yourself and conform yourself in all things to the will of God; and especially always take care to come away from meditation determined that day to live well and with edification, according to your particular condition. So you will have made a very good meditation, and a better one than if you had shed many tears and enjoyed much consolation.

This being so, there is no need for anyone to be distressed at being unable to find many reflections and considerations or feelings of devotion, for meditation does not consist in this, but in the other. Nor again should one make much account of distractions and thoughts that usually give trouble at meditation without our wanting them, a thing that we are apt very commonly to complain of. Try, when you notice this and come back to yourself, to lay hold

of what is necessary for you and of the fruit that you have to gather, and hereby supply and make up for the time that has gone over the distraction; so you will have your revenge on the devil, who has made you so distracted with irrelevant thoughts. This is a very profitable direction for meditation. As it is with one who, traveling in company with others, has fallen asleep, and his companions have gone on ahead, when he wakes, he makes ever so much effort to catch them up, and covers as much ground in a quarter of an hour as he would in a whole hour had he not fallen asleep; so you, upon advertence and coming to yourself after the distraction, must manage so well as to do in the last quarter of an hour what you would have done in the whole hour if you had been very attentive. Take account of yourself and say: What was it that I intended to get out of this meditation? What was the fruit that I came prepared to gather from it? Humility? Indifference? Resignation? Conformity to the will of God? Know, then, that I mean to get it all the same out of this meditation, just to plague the devil. And when it seems to you that you have done badly the whole meditation through and gathered none of the fruit that you desired, then at the examination of the meditation, of which we shall speak afterwards, you must do this and thereby make up for the faults that you have committed in the meditation, and so you will always gather fruit from it.

CHAPTER XIX

Of Some Other Easy Means and Methods How to Make a Good and Profitable Meditation

THERE are other easy methods that will help us much to make meditation, and which, being easily practised, evince that it is always in our power to make mental prayer and that there is no one but may make it so as to derive advantage from it.

On the first head, that is very good for this purpose which some masters of spirit observe. They say that we must not make meditation a fiction or an artificial thing, but that we must act in it as men act in matters of business; they pause to think of what they are doing and how their business goes and how it may be expected to go better. Thus the servant of God should deal with himself in meditation, simply and without artifice. How goes it with me in the matter of my spiritual progress and salvation?—for this is our business and we are in this life for nothing else than to transact this affair. Let the religious, then, take account of himself and set himself to consider very leisurely: How am I getting on with this business? What have I profited by these ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years that I have been in religion? What have I gained and acquired in the way of virtue, humility, and mortification? I want to see the account that I shall give to God of these so great advantages and means that I have enjoyed in religion to augment and increase the capital and talent that He has given me. And if hitherto I have made bad use of the time, I desire to make it up from now henceforth, that my whole life may not pass as it has gone hitherto. In the same way, every individual according to his state may set himself to think in detail, plainly and simply and without any artifice, how he does his office, how he ought to do it well and in conformity to the will of God, how he shall carry on his business in a Christian manner, how he shall govern his house and family so that all may serve God, how he shall bear well the occasional annoyances which his state and office carries with it; and in all this he will find matter enough to consider, deplore, and amend. And this will make a very good and very profitable meditation.

John Gerson tells of a servant of God who used often to say: For forty years I have studied this matter of prayer with all the care I could, and I have found no better means, no shorter and more compendious method of making a good

meditation, than to present myself before God as a little child and as a poor beggarman, blind, naked, and forlorn. This is a manner of prayer that we see the Prophet David used frequently, calling himself sometimes a sick man, sometimes an orphan, sometimes blind, sometimes poor and begging; the Psalms we find full of this. And we know by experience that many who have practised and habitually used this kind of prayer, have come thereby to attain to a very high prayer. Do you, then, adopt this practice and, please God, by this means you will come to attain what you desire. The prayer of a poor man is a very good prayer. See, says Gerson, with what patience and humility the poor man stands waiting at the gate of the rich, hoping for a small alms, and with what diligence he repairs to where he knows alms are given. And as the poor man, naked and forlorn, is before the rich, begging alms, and expecting of him with great humility and reverence a remedy for his necessity, so should we stand before God in prayer, representing to Him our poverty, our need, and our misery and hoping for remedy from His liberality and goodness. *As the eyes of the handmaid are fixed on the hands of her mistress, so should our eyes be fixed and hanging on God, till we obtain mercy of Him* (Psalm cxxii. 2).

It is told of the Abbot Paphnutius that, living in the interior of the desert and hearing tell of that bad woman Thais, how she was a snare of perdition to many souls, besides being the cause of many quarrels and murders, he conceived within himself a desire of converting her and bringing her to God. For this end he put on secular clothes, took money with him, and went to the city where she lived. And so he did convert her, taking occasion of some words which she let fall. For when he asked for a more secluded place, she said to him: "Make yourself quite easy about men, that they will not see you here, albeit from the eyes of God you cannot hide yourself in any place, how secluded soever." It is a long story, but, coming to what makes for

our purpose, he converted this woman, took her to the desert and shut her up in a cell, sealing the door with a seal of lead, leaving only one little window through which they could give her every day a small pittance of bread and a little water. When Paphnutius was taking leave of her, she asked him how she was to make prayer to God. To this the holy abbot answered: "You deserve not to take into your filthy mouth the name of God. Your prayer shall be to go on your knees, look to the east, and say many times over these words: *Thou who hast made me, have mercy on me.*" And so she remained for three years without ever taking into her mouth the name of God; always keeping before her eyes her many great sins, asking God's mercy, and saying those words that the saint had taught her. And with this prayer God was well pleased. At the end of three years, Abbot Paphnutius went to consult the blessed St. Anthony as to whether God had pardoned this woman her sins. Anthony called his monks together and bade them all sit up that night in prayer, each by himself, in order that the Lord might declare to some one of them the solution of the case on which Paphnutius had come. While then they were all at prayer, Paul, the chief of the great Anthony's disciples, saw a bed in heaven, adorned with rich hangings and upholstery and guarded by four virgins. At sight of this rich display, he thought and said within himself: "This reward and gracious welcome is kept for none other than my Father Anthony." While he was thinking this, he heard a heavenly voice which said: "This bed is not for thy Father Anthony, but for the sinner Thais." And fifteen days after, it pleased the Lord to take her to enjoy the glory and repose of heaven. Be you, then, satisfied with holding to this prayer and make up your mind that you do not deserve any other, and I dare say you will please God more than by that prayer which you fancy.

In a spiritual treatise, "On Spiritual Communion," left in manuscript by a Carthusian monk, the author recounts

a story of our holy Father and his companions, which he assures us he received from a person worthy of credit. Ignatius and his companions were going one day to Barcelona on foot, as ordinarily they were wont to do, each one carrying his knapsack upon his back. They met upon the way a good man who saw them, had compassion on them, and pressed them extremely to give him their knapsacks to carry, alleging that he was stronger and better able to carry them than they. After much demurring they gave in to his importunities, and so continued their journey. When they arrived at the inn, the Fathers contrived each one to seek out his corner, there to recollect himself and commend himself to God. The good man, seeing them do this, also contrived to seek out his corner and put himself on his knees as they did. Pursuing their journey, they asked him one day: "Brother, what do you do there in that corner?" He answered that what he did was to say: "Lord, these are saints, and I am their beast of burden; what they do, I desire to do, and I offer that then to God." The man made such progress by this prayer that he came to be a very spiritual man and had the gift of a very high prayer. Now who is there that cannot, if he will, make this prayer?

I knew an ancient Father of the Society, a very great preacher, whose prayer for a long time was to say with great humility and simplicity to God: "Lord, I am a beast. I know not how to make my prayer. Teach me Yourself to make it." And by this means he made great progress and came to an eminent degree in prayer, fulfilling in himself what the prophet said: *I am become as a beast before thee, and am always with thee* (Psalm lxxii. 23). Humble yourself, then, as a beast of burden before God, and the Lord will be with you. Much is arranged and gained in this way with His Divine Majesty. So the saints take note here of a thing of much importance, that, as humility is a means to attain the gift of prayer, so also prayer should serve as a means to attain humility and keep us and make us

advance in it. And they add that from a good prayer one should always get up with a sense of humiliation and confusion. Whence it follows that, when you come from your meditation highly pleased with yourself, with an indescribable vain complacency and a secret esteem and good opinion of yourself, saying to yourself that now you are getting on and becoming a spiritual man, you should hold that prayer in grave suspicion. So if you say that you cannot find many considerations nor high contemplations, humble yourself and draw that good from your meditation. None can excuse himself from doing this, and it will make a very good prayer.

Father Master Avila, in one of his letters, gives a very good means to adopt when one cannot get on at meditation, but is a prey to divers thoughts and temptations. Throw yourself, he says, at the feet of Christ, and say: "Lord, inasmuch as this is my own fault, I am certainly very sorry for the fault I am in and the occasion I have given; but inasmuch as it is Thy will, and the punishment and chastisement that I have justly deserved for my great faults in the past, and my present negligences and defects, I accept it with all my heart and am glad to receive at Thy hand this cross, this dryness and distraction, this desolation and spiritual dereliction." This patience and humility will be a very good prayer and please God more than the prayer you desired to make, as we shall say more at large farther on.

It is told of our Father Francis Borgia that, when he thought he had not done his meditation well, he took care that day to mortify himself more and go about all his duties with greater attention and diligence, thus to make up for the failure of the meditation, and so he counseled us to do. This a very good way of making up the defects of meditation and will serve also to bring us to make our meditation well. The holy Abbot Nilus, speaking of prayer, says that, as when we fall out of order and go amiss during the day and commit some fault, we seem to feel at once

the chastisement of God in prayer, because He shows us then a severe countenance; so also, when we have mortified and overcome ourselves in something, we seem at once to feel it at prayer, God seeming to will to pay us there in money down. "If you suffer in patience hard and rough things, you will find the fruit of your labor in time of prayer." (St. Nilus.) The saint mentions for making prayer, quite in accord with what we have just been saying: "If you want to pray well, do nothing contrary to prayer; in this way God will draw nigh to you and do you many favors."

And in general let all understand that the chiefest care of the servant of God should be to cleanse and mortify his heart, to keep himself from all sin, and be ever quite firmly resolved not to commit a mortal sin for anything in the world. In this resolve he should found himself right well in prayer, and dwell upon it, and again and again move himself thereto, for there is nothing more necessary for us so long as we are in this miserable life; and on this foundation everyone should build all the rest of his contemplated edifice of perfection. And you should not repine at this, but be very grateful to God even though He grants you no other and higher prayer; for holiness consists not in meditation, but in doing the will of God. *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is all man* (Eccles. xii. 13), so Solomon concludes the discourse of Ecclesiastes; that is to say, in this consists all the well-being of man and fulfilment of his duty, and with this he will be holy and perfect.

I wish to conclude with a method very consoling for all. When you do not feel at meditation that entry into things, that attention and devotion, that intimate union which you desire, exercise yourself in having a great will and desire of it, and thereby you will make up for what you think is wanting to you; since God our Lord, as the saints say, is not less content and satisfied with this good will and desire than with high and lofty prayer. God taught this

to the holy virgin Gertrude, as Blossius relates. He says that one day this saint was complaining that she could not keep her heart so elevated to God as she desired and thought herself obliged to do; whereupon she was taught from heaven that with God it is enough for man to wish for and sincerely desire to have a great desire, when at heart he feels little or nothing. Before God his desire is as great as he would fain have it to be. In a heart that has the like desire—you must understand, a will and desire to have it—she was told that God dwells more willingly than any man could among fresh and delightful flowers. God has no need of your high prayer; He seeks only for your heart; *that* He looks to, and *that* He takes for the deed. Offer yourself entirely to God in prayer, give Him your whole heart, and desire to be there in heaven praying with the fervor of the highest seraphs; and this good will God will regard and take for the deed. Accordingly, it will be a most pious devotion and profitable reflection, when we find ourselves tepid and dry at meditation, to consider how many servants of God are there at prayer—perhaps shedding tears and even their blood—and join ourselves in spirit to them; and not to them alone, but to the angels and heavenly spirits also, putting ourselves in relation with what they are doing and so supplying what we cannot do, saying in our heart, and often with our lips, those words of the canon of the mass: “Deign, O Lord, to receive, along with the prayers of the angels and saints in glory, our voices also, who in humble confession cry out to Thee, ‘Holy, holy, holy.’” Lord, what they say, I say; what they do, I also wish to do; and as they praise and love, I also would fain praise and bless and love Thee. And sometimes it will be well to fall back upon ourselves, when at any time we seemed to have made a good meditation, and say: “Lord, what I wished then, I wish now; as then I offered myself entirely to Thee, so I offer myself now; in that manner in which I then grieved for my sins and desired humility,

patience, obedience, in that same manner now, O Lord, I desire and ask for them."

Above all, it is a marvelous good practice to unite our actions with the actions of Christ and supply our faults and imperfections by the merits of Christ and of His sacred Passion. And this we should do not only as regards prayer, but in all other actions, offering to the eternal Father our prayers in union with the love and fervor with which Christ prayed and praised Him on earth: our fasts in union with His fastings; begging the Father to be pleased to supply our impatience by the patience of Christ, our pride by His humility, our evil doing by His innocence. This practice, Blossius says, our Lord revealed to some of His special friends that so we may make our actions to be of value and merit and by this method may eke out our poverty by the infinite treasure of the merits of Christ.

CHAPTER XX

That We Must Be Content with the Prayer Described, and Not Repine or Complain at Not Reaching Anything Higher

ALBERTUS MAGNUS says that a truly humble man does not dare to lift up his heart to desire that high and exalted prayer and those extraordinary favors which the Lord sometimes bestows on His friends. He has such a mean opinion of himself that he thinks himself unworthy of all favor and spiritual consolation; and if ever, without his desiring it, the Lord visits him with some consolation, he receives it with fear, thinking that he does not deserve these comforts and bounties and knows not how to profit by them as he should. So if we had humility in us, we should be quite content with any manner of prayer of those that we have described; or rather, we should take it for a particular favor of the Lord that He takes us by the road

of humility, for by this we are safe, and in any other way possibly we might fall into vanity and perdition. St. Bernard says that God deals with us as parents on earth do with their children of tender age. If the child asks for bread, they give it willingly; but if it asks for a knife to divide the bread, they will not give it, for they see that it is not necessary, but rather might do the child harm by its cutting itself with it; so the father takes the knife himself and divides the bread, that the child may have no trouble nor run any risk. In this way the Lord acts; He gives you bread already divided into portions, but has no mind to give you the sensible sweetnesses and consolations that there are in high prayer, because perchance you might cut yourself therewith, taking yourself for a spiritual man and preferring yourself to others. The Lord does you a greater favor in giving you your bread already cut than if He gave you a knife to cut the bread. If God by this your present prayer gives you strength and fortitude so great that you would rather burst asunder than sin and keeps you all your life without falling into mortal sin, what better prayer do you want or what better fruit?

This is the answer which the father of the prodigal son gave to the elder brother, who was indignant at seeing his brother received with such festive rejoicings and would not go into the house, saying: "I have served thee so many years and have been subject to thy command and have always been obedient, and thou hast never given me so much as a kid to make merry with my friends; but for this other, who has wasted his property and been disobedient, thou hast killed the fatted calf and made a splendid feast with ever so much music and great doings." The father answered: "Son, see that I do not this because I cherish that other rather than thee. Thou art always in my house with me; still, it will be well for thee to know and duly value what I am doing for thee; do I not always show thee favors and bounty enough in keeping thee always with me?"

(Luke xv. 28-31). And so in your case do you think it a small thing that the Lord should keep you always with Him in His house? It is a better gift that the Lord should give the gift of perseverance and keep you always by Him, not letting you depart from Him and fall into sin, than that He should reach you a hand after a fall, as He did to the prodigal son; just as it is a better gift not to let you break your head than to cure you after it is broken. Now if God, with this prayer that you have, gives you this, what have you to complain of? If with this prayer He gives you a great readiness for all things that form part of the service of God, indifference and resignation for all orders of obedience, what more do you want? If God with this prayer keeps you in humility and in His fear and in the habit of going cautiously, shunning occasions and dangers of sin, why should you sigh for more? This is the fruit that you should draw from any prayer, however high and exalted, that you reached; and were the Lord to give you many spiritual sweetnesses and consolations therein, to this you should refer them all. Now this is what God is doing for you with that plain and ordinary prayer; He gives you the end and fruit of prayer otherwise than by means of those extraordinary elevations and spiritual sweetnesses and consolations, as they experience who persevere in that prayer. So we ought to render God twofold thanks, for that on the one hand He delivers us from the danger of vanity and pride which we might fall into if He took us by the other road; and on the other hand that He gives us the fruit and profit of meditation in full abundance. Holy Writ tells us of the holy patriarch Joseph that he spoke to his brethren in harsh and severe words, and on the other hand he filled their sacks with corn and told his steward to see them well treated. So the Lord often deals with us.

We do not sufficiently understand in what meditation consists; or rather, we do not sufficiently understand in what our spiritual progress and perfection consists, which

is the end and fruit of meditation. Thus, many times when things are going badly with us, we think they are going well; and when they are going well, we think they are going badly. Draw from your meditation the fruit we have described, especially to live that day well and with edification, as we have said above, and you will have made a good meditation, though, when you were at it, you were drier than a stick and harder than a stone. And if you do not gather this fruit, you have not made a good meditation, though you were shedding tears the whole time and thought yourself lifted to the third heaven. Henceforth, then, do not complain of meditation, but turn all your complaints against yourself, and say: "I'm getting on badly in mortification. I'm getting on badly in humility, in patience, silence, and recollection." That is a good complaint, since you are complaining of yourself, that you do not do what you ought to do and is in your power. On the other hand, when you go complaining of meditation, it looks like complaining of God for not giving you the facility and consolation and repose you would like. That is not a good complaint; it is not a speech to move God to mercy, but rather to anger and indignation, as holy Judith said to the people of Bethulia: *That is not a speech to call down mercy, but rather to excite anger and kindle indignation* (Jud. viii. 12). It is a wonderful thing to see how we go the wrong way about things in this business, not seeing that what we ought to complain of is our not being forward in mortifying, humbling, and correcting ourselves, which is in our power; and instead of that we go complaining of that which is not in our power, but stands to God's account. Busy yourself in mortifying and overcoming yourself and do your part therein, and leave to God what stands to Him to do, seeing He is more desirous of our good than we are ourselves; and if we do what is on our part, we may be quite sure that He will not fail in giving us on His part what is proper for us. Of this we will speak at greater

length in treating of conformity to the will of God, where more of set purpose we will meet this complaint and temptation.

CHAPTER XXI

Of the Causes of Distraction at Prayer, and Remedies for It

THIS is a very common complaint, and so the saints commonly treat of it, Cassian in particular. They say that distraction in prayer may come of three causes or roots. The first is our own carelessness and negligence in pouring ourselves out during the day with little guard of our heart and little custody of our senses. He who lives in this way has no need to inquire whence it comes that he is distracted in prayer and can make no way in it, since it is clear that the images, shapes, and representations of things that have been allowed to enter therein must needs afterwards molest and disturb one in prayer. Abbot Moses in the Collations of Cassian says very well that, though it is not in the power of man not to be assailed with importunate thoughts, still it is in his power to refuse them admittance and cast them out when they come. He goes on to say that it is largely in a man's power to correct and amend the quality of these thoughts and make them good and holy, and consign to oblivion those others that are vain and irrelevant. If a man gives himself to spiritual exercises of reading, meditation, and prayer, and occupies himself in good and holy works, he will have good and holy thoughts; but if he deals with nothing of the sort during the day, but lets his senses browse on idle and irrelevant objects, such also will be his thoughts. And Cassian makes a comparison, which is also that of St. Anselm and St. Bernard. They say that the heart of a man is like a millstone which is always grinding; but it is in the power of the miller to make it grind wheat, or barley, or rye; what you put under

it, that it will grind. So the heart of man cannot go without thinking of something; it must always grind, but by your industry and care you may make it grind wheat, or barley, or rye, or earth; what you put into it, that it will grind.

According, then, to this, if you wish to be recollected at prayer, you must take care during the day to keep your heart recollected and guard the gates of your senses; the Lord loves to converse with souls that are as enclosed gardens. This was a maxim of the ancient Fathers, and Cassian quotes it. You must take the current of your thoughts higher upstream, and keep yourself during the day in such condition as you would wish to find yourself in prayer; since from the state and temper of the mind out of prayer is formed and determined what it is to be in prayer. St. Bonaventure says: "As is the liquid that you pour into a vessel, such will be the odor; and as are the herbs which you plant in the garden of your heart, such will be the fruit and seed that they will produce."

And since it is quite a common and natural thing to think often of what one loves, if you wish to keep your heart steady and firm at prayer, and that thoughts of vain and irrelevant things may be forgotten and put an end to, you must mortify your affection for them, despise all the things of earth and fix your heart on those of heaven. And the more you advance and grow in this, the more also you will advance and grow in firmness, steadiness, and attention at prayer.

Secondly, these distractions are wont to arise from the temptation of our enemy, the devil. St. Basil says that, as the devil sees that prayer is the means whereby all good comes to us, he endeavors by all ways and means he possibly can to hinder it and put a thousand obstacles in our way, that, finding us bereft of this help, he may gain readier entrance into our soul for his deceits and temptations. He acts with us as the general, Holofernes, did with the

city of Bethulia, which was standing a siege against him. He cut the aqueducts whereby water came into the city (Judith vii. 6); in like manner the devil does all in his power to break and dismantle in us this aqueduct of prayer, whereby the water of grace and of all spiritual blessings finds its way into our soul. St. John Climacus says that, as at the sound of the bell the faithful and religious visibly assemble to pray and praise God, so our enemies, the devils, unite at that time invisibly to tempt us and hinder us from prayer. In the "Spiritual Meadow" it is told of one of the Fathers of the Desert, the Abbot Marcellus, that, rising one night to pray and sing psalms according to his custom, he heard the sound of a trumpet, sounding what seemed like a battle-charge. The old man was much puzzled to imagine where such a sound could come from in such a lonely place, where there were no soldiers nor any war. Then the devil appeared to him and told him that, though he thought there was no battle going on, there was a battle, and that trumpet roused the devils to attack the servants of God; and that, if he wanted to escape the combat, he had better go back to bed and sleep, otherwise he would see it. But he, trusting in the Lord, started his prayer and went on with it.

One of the things that go far to let us see the great importance of prayer is the great spite that the devil has against it and the continual war that he makes upon it, as the holy Abbot Nilus well observes. Other good works the devil suffers and can get on with, as fasting, discipline, and haircloth; but an allotted time of prayer he cannot endure and tries by all ways in his power to hinder and put obstacles to it. Hence it is that, when we are at prayer, we are apt occasionally to feel more temptations than at other times. Then there seems to come upon us the whole troop of thoughts, thoughts at times so evil and foul that it looks as though we had come here for no other purpose than to be tempted and molested with all manner of temptations. Things that never have occurred to us, never

entered our mind in the whole course of our life, then present themselves at meditation; everything seems to have been kept for then. That is because the devil knows that prayer and meditation is the remedy for all our ills, the source and origin of all spiritual blessings; therefore he takes great pains and calls out all his powers to hinder it. That is why the saints call prayer the torment and scourge of the Evil One. The same should be to us a reason and motive for esteeming it all the more and giving ourselves all the more to it, the more we see the devil for envy trying to stop us. St. Thomas, Abulensis, and other grave authors say that this is the reason why holy Mother Church, guided by the Holy Ghost and understanding well the wont of the devil to tempt and make all the war he can upon people at their prayers, has ordained that at the beginning of every canonical hour there should be repeated the verse: *Incline unto my aid, O God: O Lord, make haste to help me*; whereby we implore the Lord's gracious aid to pray as we ought, and His assistance against the snares and temptations of our enemies.

Thirdly, these thoughts and distractions sometimes come, without any fault of ours, from our own infirmity and weakness; for we are so weak and miserable, and our nature is so maimed and depraved by sin, our imagination especially, that we cannot say an Our Father without sundry incongruous thoughts' coming into our mind, as St. Bernard complained. For this it will be a good remedy to take for matter of our meditation the very distress that we suffer, humbling ourselves, considering and recognizing how great our weakness is, for this humility and self-knowledge will be a good meditation. Besides this, we will mention other remedies that the saints and masters of the spiritual life give us.

CHAPTER XXII

*Of Other Means of Keeping Up Attention and Reverence
at Meditation*

THE blessed St. Basil asks how one can keep one's heart firm, attentive, and undistracted in prayer, and says that the most efficacious means is to consider that one is in the presence of God, and that He is looking to see how one prays. Here on earth, in the presence of a sovereign, conversing with him, one stands with great respect and reverence, paying great attention to what he does and to the manner and style of doing it. We should take for great discourtesy to turn our back on his majesty and bring in a medley of remarks not to the point. What shall he do who shall attentively consider that he is in the presence of the majesty of God, that God is looking at him, not only at his outer man that is visible exteriorly, but into the innermost recesses of his heart! Who is there that shall dare to take off his eyes and his thought from what he is doing, to turn his back on God and go thinking of other irrelevant things? The great monk James, as Theodoret relates, made use of this consideration to show what a great piece of rudeness that is. St. Augustine also says the same. If I were the domestic servant, he says, of a man of the same nature as myself, and at the time that I ought to be serving him I omitted bringing him his meat and drink to go talking with another servant, he would have just reason to rebuke and chastise me. And if I went before a judge to complain of someone who had done me wrong, and then left him in the midst of the proceedings and stayed chatting with some one of the lookers-on in court, think you not that the judge would take me for an ill-mannered man and bid such as ill-bred suitor be off from his tribunal where he was sitting in judgment? But this is what they do who go to prayer to speak with God and then give way to distractions, thinking of other things quite out of place

there. Our Father also sets down this means in one of the "additions," or notices, which he gives for meditation, where he says that, a little before starting the meditation, for the space of one Our Father we should raise up our heart to heaven and consider that God is there present and is looking at us, and so with great reverence and humility we should enter on the meditation. And we must take care that this presence of God is not to be lost sight of all the time of the meditation, according to the saying of the prophet: *The meditation of my heart is in thy sight always* (Psalm xviii. 15).

St. Chrysostom says: When you go to prayer, reckon that you are entering the heavenly court, where the King of Glory is seated under a starry canopy, surrounded with innumerable angels and saints, and that they are all looking at you, according to that saying of St. Paul: *We are a spectacle to God, and to the angels and to men* (I Cor. iv. 9). St. Bernard advises us what we ought to do in such surroundings: "When you enter the church to betake yourself to prayer, put your hand on your mouth and say: 'Stay ye here at the door, ye evil thoughts and desires, and do thou, my soul, enter into the joy of thy Lord, that thou mayest see and do His holy will' "—*Veniens ad ecclesiam pone manum tuam super os tuum et dic: Expectate hic, cogitationes malae, intentiones et affectus cordis et appetitus carnis: tu autem, anima mea, intra in gaudium Domini Dei tui*. St. John Climacus says: Let him who prays consider that he is really before God; let him be like a firm and steady pillar that moves not. And he relates how once, seeing a religious more attentive than the others at the chanting of the psalms, and especially at the beginning of the hymns, with his mien and look quite changed, as though he were speaking to someone, he asked him afterwards to tell him what it meant. The monk replied: "At the beginning of the divine office it is my practice with great care to gather together my heart and thoughts, and call them

before me and say: *Come let us adore, and fall down, and weep before the Lord that made us, because he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand* (Psalm xciv. 6-7). All these are very good and profitable considerations for securing attention and reverence at prayer.

Others give for a remedy to meditate in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, if we are in a place where we can do so; or to look towards the nearest place where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, and fix our heart there: also to look at pictures and images. Others again aid themselves by looking up to heaven. It is also a good means to enliven oneself under distractions and dryness at meditation to say some ejaculatory prayers and speak orally to God, representing our weakness and asking a remedy for it. *Lord, I suffer violence, answer thou for me* (Isaias xxxviii. 14). That blind man in the Gospel, when Christ our Redeemer seemed to take no notice of him and was passing him by, and the company were bidding him hold his peace, still ceased not to cry out, lifting up his voice higher and higher, saying, *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me* (Mark x. 47). So we should do when the Lord makes as though He did not hear us and seems to pass us by without attending to us; and though the crowd and rout of thoughts and temptations impels us to be silent, not for that should we be silent, but cry out louder and louder: *Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Strengthen me, O Lord God, in this hour* (Judith xiii. 9), that I may be able to think of Thee and be firm and constant in prayer. A holy woman used to say: If you cannot speak to God with your heart, cease not to speak to Him by word of mouth repeatedly; for what is thus said over and over again, readily communicates heat and fervor to the heart. And this same saint confessed that sometimes, for not having used these vocal prayers, she had lost her mental prayer, weighed down and hampered by sloth and sleep. And this sometimes befalls us; it

comes to pass that we neglect to use our voices at meditation out of sloth and weakness and being half asleep; whereas, if we did speak, we should be awakened and roused to meditation.

Gerson also says that it is a good remedy against distractions to bring the exercise well prepared, and have several points fixed as matter for meditation, because thereby, when we are distracted and notice the same, we have ready our fixed and determined point to have recourse to; and if we make no way with that, we pass on to another point of those which we have ready prepared, and so recover more easily the thread of our meditation. And we ourselves find, when we examine ourselves, that oftentimes the cause of our distractions and mind-wandering was our not having brought well prepared and known the points on which we were to meditate, nor having had any definite and fixed resolves to bring ourselves to. Besides, this admonition and the one that follows it are necessary for us to come well prepared to meditation; accordingly our Father commends them to help us in these emphatic words: "It will be a great help, before starting meditation, to call to mind the points that are to be meditated on, and have marked out a definite number of them." And we read of him that not only at the beginning of his conversion, but afterwards also, when he was old, he would read and prepare his exercise at nightfall and retire to rest with that on his mind; so that none may think that this is a business for novices. And though you know the exercise very well from having meditated several times before, yet it is an excellent thing to prepare it afresh; especially since, as these are the words of Holy Scripture, dictated by the Holy Ghost, the reading of them with a little quiet and repose arouses new attention and devotion to meditate and profit by them better.

It will also help us very much to this purpose, immediately on awakening, not to give place to other thoughts, but think of the exercise we have to make and prepare our-

selves for our meditation by some consideration adapted to the matter thereof. Cassian, St. Bonaventure, and St. John Climacus hold this admonition to be of great importance. They say that thereon depends the guidance of the meditation and, consequently, the good order of the whole day. St. John Climacus observes that the devil, seeing this to be so important, keeps a sharp watch for our first waking, to the end that he may at once seize upon the lodging and thus gather the first-fruits of the whole day. He says, also, that among the wicked spirits there is one they call Precursor, whose charge it is to assail us by night at the time that we awake out of sleep; or, even before we are quite awake or come perfectly to ourselves, to put before us foul and filthy fancies or, at least, idle ones, and thereby take possession of us for the whole day, figuring to himself that all will be his who first occupies the heart. Wherefore it is important that we also be greatly on the alert to give no place to this, but immediately on our awakening, when we have scarcely opened our eyes, there should be already planted in our heart the memory of our Lord before any strange thought comes to occupy the lodging. Our Father also gives us the same recommendation, and adds that the same practice should be kept up, in such manner as is possible, when meditation is made at another hour. We should in that case pull ourselves together beforehand, thinking, "Where am I going? And before whom am I to appear?" So we should briefly call to mind the matter of the meditation, as one tunes a violin before playing. And generally our Father used to say that on the observance of these and other like directions, which he calls "additions," depend in great measure the success of the meditation and the fruit to be drawn from it. And it is our ordinary experience that, when we go well prepared and observe well these directions, things go well with us at meditation, and badly when we do not.

The Holy Ghost says by the Wise Man: *Before prayer prepare thy soul, and be not as a man who tempteth God*

(Ecclus. xviii. 23). St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure observe on these words that to go to prayer without preparation is in a manner to tempt God because to tempt God, as theologians and saints say, is to seek to gain an end without taking the ordinary and necessary means thereto, as if one were to say: "I will not eat, because God can easily sustain me without eating; He will sustain me." That would be tempting God and asking for a miracle without necessity. When the devil carried Christ our Redeemer to the pinnacle of the Temple, and tried to persuade Him to cast Himself headlong, since God would command His angels to receive Him and bear Him up in their hands, He answered: *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God* (Matt. iv. 7). "I can come down by the stairs; that other way would be to tempt God to work a miracle without necessity." Now preparation is so principal and necessary a means to meditation that the Wise Man says that to seek to make meditation without preparation is to tempt God and want Him to work a miracle on your behalf. Our Lord certainly wishes us to make a good meditation, with great attention and reverence, but by the ordinary means, that is to say, by disposing and preparing ourselves for it in the manner we have said.

CHAPTER XXIII

A Great Comfort for Those Who Are Troubled with Distractions at Prayer

FOR the comfort of those who are troubled with this temptation, St. Basil observes that God is offended by these thoughts and distractions only when they are voluntary, when a man is distracted with advertence and seeing what he is about, with scant reverence and respect. He who at prayer sets himself on purpose to think of his studies, of the duties of his office, or of business, well deserves that God should not listen to him, but rather chastise him.

Here comes in well what St. Chrysostom says: "How can you expect God to hear you if you do not hear yourself?" But when a man honestly does what is in his power, and is distracted through weakness, and unable to keep up such attention as he would wish—his thought failing him and flying in other directions, as the prophet says, *My heart hath abandoned me* (Psalm xxxix. 13)—then the Lord is not offended at that, but rather is moved to compassion and commiseration, knowing well as He does our infirmity and weakness. *As a father hath compassion on his children, so the Lord hath compassion on them that fear him, for he knoweth the clay of which we are formed* (Psalm cii. 13-14). As a father who has a son liable to fits of insanity, has compassion on him and feels it much when the boy begins to converse in his right mind and then comes out with some absurdity; so our most compassionate Father in heaven pities and compassionates us when He sees that such is the weakness and infirmity of our nature that at the nick of time, when we are conversing with Him in our right mind, we break out into a thousand incongruous thoughts. And thus, though one never feels any sap or moisture of devotion at meditation, but very great dryness, and is assailed by thoughts and temptations and passes all the time in this way, not for that does the meditation cease to be very pleasing to God our Lord and of great value and merit in His august divine presence; nay, often it is more pleasing and meritorious than if the time had passed in much devotion and consolation, because the person has suffered and borne more labor and difficulty in it for the love of God. And he does not fail, either, in gaining by that meditation grace and favors to enable him to serve the Lord better and grow in virtue and perfection, although he does not feel it. So it happens to a sick man when he eats some nourishing food; though he has no appetite and finds no relish in it, but only pain and torment, yet he gathers strength thereby and is kept up and becomes better.

From what has been said it will be seen what a great error it is to give up meditation because in it one finds oneself a prey to many thoughts and temptations. Only we need to be well warned and take care lest on this occasion, under the plea that we can do no more, we give entry to tepidity and remissness, getting into easy-going ways and letting things slide, carried away by every wind that blows, carelessly letting thought and imagination go where it will. No; we must do what is on our part; we must with great care and diligence have an eye to and drive away those thoughts as the holy patriarch Abraham drove away and kept an eye on the birds that were swooping down on the sacrifice (Gen. xv. 11). While in this matter we do honestly what is in our power, there is nothing to deserve punishment.

We read of St. Bridget that, when she was much wearied with many distractions at prayer, our Lady one day appeared to her and said to her: "The devil, envious of the good of men, does all in his power to put impediments and obstacles in their way when they are at prayer; but do thou, daughter, take care to persevere as best thou canst in thy good will and holy desires, whatever temptation may trouble thee, how evil soever it be, and unable as thou mayest feel to throw it off; and that will be a very good and profitable prayer, and of great merit before God." We have mentioned above (Chapter 18) a very good means to recover what we think we have lost by distraction.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Temptation to Sleep, Whence It Comes, and the Remedies to Meet It

ANOTHER kind of distraction is the temptation to sleep. That may arise sometimes from natural causes, as want of sleep, heavy fatigue and labor, the hour, the per-

son's age, excessive eating and drinking, though it be only of water. At other times it comes from a temptation of the devil, as those holy Fathers of the Desert related that God showed in vision that there were some devils who settled on the cowls and heads of monks and made them sleep and others who put a finger in their mouths and made them yawn. At other times it comes from our remissness and negligence and our taking a posture in prayer that occasions sleep.

The principal remedy is that already mentioned; namely, attention and remembering that we are in the presence of God. One would not dare to sleep in presence of a great sovereign, neither should we dare if we reflected that we are in presence of the majesty of God regarding us; so reflecting, we should be much ashamed to sleep at meditation. It is also a good remedy to stand up, not to lean against anything, to wash the eyes with cold water; and some are in the habit of carrying a wet handkerchief for that purpose when they are molested with this temptation. Others help themselves by looking up to the sky, by opening the window to the light, or by going to make their meditation in presence of the Blessed Sacrament in company with others; or again by taking a discipline before meditation, which keeps them wide-awake and devout. Others, likewise, at meditation inflict on themselves some pain, which keeps them awake; or, if they are alone, they extend their arms for some time in the form of a cross. It is also helpful to recite some vocal prayers—a great help to keeping awake and lively, as we have said above (Chapter 22). There are these and other like remedies, besides begging our Lord to heal us of this infirmity.

Caesarius in his Dialogues tells of a religious of the Cistercian order who often used to sleep over his prayer. One day Christ our Redeemer appeared to him, crucified with his back turned to him, and said: "Because you are remiss and tepid, you deserve not to see My face." He tells of

another who came in for a more severe castigation; for, he being at prayer in choir and sleeping as usual, there came to him a crucifix from the altar and gave him such a blow on the jowl that two days after he died. All this gives us well to understand how displeasing to God is such remissness and tepidity. *Because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth* (Apoc. iii. 16).

Of St. Romuald, abbot and founder of the Camaldolese, St. Peter Damian relates that he took it for such a grave fault for any of his religious to sleep in time of prayer that he would not allow the delinquent to say mass the day he had fallen into this fault, for the little respect he had shown in presence of the Lord Whom he was to receive.

CHAPTER XXV

How Proper It Is to Take Some Extraordinary Times to Give Ourselves More to Prayer

AS men of the world besides their daily meals have their extraordinary feasts and banquets, in which they are wont to go beyond their ordinary fare; so also it is proper that besides our daily prayer we should have our spiritual feasts and banquets, where our souls shall not feed by pittance as on other days, but have their fill of the abundance of the sweetness and grace of the Lord. And nature herself teaches us the same practice; for we see that, not content with the dew that falls every night on the earth, it will also at times rain a whole week or two without stopping; and all that rain is necessary that so the earth may be thoroughly soaked with water, and no days of sunshine and wind coming after may avail to dry it up. So, then, it is also proper that our souls, besides the common dew of every day, should have some well-marked times in which they may wax so full of virtue and the sap of devotion that neither their occupations, nor the winds of the temp-

tations and vicissitudes of life, may be able to dry them up. So we read of many holy men and prelates of the Church that many times, leaving their occupations and affairs, they would often recollect themselves for a time in places set apart to give themselves more to prayer and contemplation. We read of the holy Abbot Arsenius that it was his custom to take one day a week for this purpose, and that was the Saturday, on which day he remained in prayer from the afternoon to the morning of the next day.

And this is a very important expedient, not only for our advancement and growth in virtue and perfection, but also to prevent our falling back. For such is the weakness and misery of man and the inclination we have to evil that, though we begin sometimes our spiritual exercises with fervor, we afterwards come little by little to grow lax and fall off from the fervor with which we commenced. We return to our tepidity and remissness as easily as water, however much it is heated, afterwards returns little by little to its natural coldness when it is taken off the fire. Indeed, tepidity seems more ingrained and connatural to us than coldness to water. As the Holy Spirit says: *The senses and thought of a man's heart are inclined to evil from his youth, for wicked is their race and connatural their malice* (Wisdom xii. 10). As we are of nothing, we return to our nothingness.

Add to this that in a busy life like ours, taken up as some of us are with studies, others with the work of the ministry, others in offices and exterior employments, we stand in more particular need of these intervals of recollection because, good and holy as our occupations are, yet as a knife is blunted by daily use and from time to time must be sharpened again because the steel has lost its edge, so we come to be blunted and lose the care of our spiritual advancement from having to help others. Even there in the world philosophers say: *Omnis agens agendo patitur*—"An agent suffers and loses something of his own." And

everyone knows this well by his own experience. On this account it imports much to recollect ourselves from time to time, disengaging ourselves from all other occupations to make up this loss and replace the daily waste and gather new strength to go forward, since we are more bound to ourselves than to our neighbor, and well-ordered charity begins at home.

Especially so, since for the very end of aiding and advancing our neighbor this care of ourselves is of great importance; for it is certain that on our own greater spiritual advancement depends the greater spiritual advancement of our neighbor. Thus the time is not lost to our neighbor that we take for ourselves, but rather is gained; it is like letting land lie fallow for a year that it may bear a better crop afterwards. Father Master Avila says that it is like taking the millstone off to pick it anew that it may grind better. Thus one's being a very busy man is not only no reason for not doing this; but, rather, the busier a man is and the more charged with ministrations and business affairs, the greater need he has of having recourse to this remedy. Those who voyage by sea need often to come into port to take refreshment; so those who are charged with business affairs and occupations and ministrations to their neighbor, in the midst of so many dangers and occasions of sin, need often to take refuge in the harbor of solitude and recollection, to refresh themselves and make themselves up anew and increase their store of the goods they require. We read in the holy Gospel a very good example of this. The Evangelist St. Mark tells how the apostles were very much taken up with ministrations to their neighbor, so much so that they had hardly time to eat, such was the crowd of people that had recourse to them. They went to make a report to Christ our Redeemer of what was happening, and He said to them: *Come apart to a desert place and rest ye awhile* (Mark vi. 31). Now, if the apostles had need of this relaxation and recollection, and the Savior

of the world advised them to it, how much more need have we?

Writers on prayer say well that as sleep is to the body, so is prayer to the soul. So Holy Scripture calls it a sleep: *I sleep, but my heart watcheth. I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the goats of the mountains and stags of the plains, not to awaken my beloved until she herself wishes it* (Cant. v. 2; viii. 4). They say in explanation of this that as the body is set at ease by bodily sleep and gathers new strength, so the soul is relieved by this sleep of prayer and gathers new vigor of mind to labor for God. And, further, as a man eating the best food, if he has not the repose of necessary sleep, becomes listless and infirm and is in danger of going out of his mind, so also he who is much taken up with external works, however good and holy they may be, if he loses the necessary sleep and repose of prayer, will grow listless and infirm in spirit and will be in danger of losing his soul. That is why the Bridegroom bids them not to awaken His beloved till she herself wishes. When one is awakened from sleep by the noise that they make, it is disagreeable; but when one wakes because the body is now satisfied and the humors that ascend to the brain have been dissipated, that is very soothing. So God wishes for the soul that none may disturb or hinder her prayer, but that, when she has had what is necessary, then she may awake and occupy herself in works of charity, since in this way she will do them well

Though for all of us, at all times, it is very important to apply ourselves to these spiritual exercises and devote more time to prayer, and the more we make use of it the better, yet it is more necessary in certain particular occasions and conjunctures. Thus, when one sees himself going tepid and slack in the spiritual exercises of meditation, examen, and spiritual reading, not doing them as he ought nor gathering from them the fruit that might reasonably be expected; when he sees that he is weak and negligent in the observ-

ance of rules and makes no account of small things; when he seems to be not getting on in spirit, but is turned inside out, carried away by business and the affairs he has on hand; also when he descries some point on which he does not succeed in overcoming and mortifying himself as he ought—in all these cases it is an excellent thing to recollect oneself for some days over these exercises, to arrive at a proper resolution of self-conquest; for it may be that in one period of these he will gain more grace of the Lord and more strength to mortify himself and gain the victory over himself than by the ordinary labor of many days. It often happens that a man goes halting on his way, falling and rising again, and by one course of these exercises he is disenchanted and gets thoroughly in earnest and resolves to do the right thing; he changes his tone and takes another line of action. For, after all, the being for such a time alone, dealing with oneself and with God, is a great preparation for the Lord to speak to the heart and do great favors there. *He shall sit in solitude and be silent, for he is lifted above himself* (Lam. iii. 28)—lifted above himself and made another man. We have seen extraordinary changes brought about in this way, and *the hand of the Lord is not shortened* (Isaias lix. 1). We should never lose heart, but always do what is in our power. Who knows what God will work in your soul by means of this preparation? It may be that God has attached your improvement and perfection to one of these exercises.

Besides, after any long journeys and businesses and occupations that involve much distraction, this recollection seems as important as the comfort and good treatment of the body after a long illness, that one may come back upon oneself and recover what one has lost. And for the same reason also it is a very good thing to prepare ourselves beforehand by these exercises, when we are going to be taken up with the like occupations, so as to do things in a more spiritual way and without injury to oneself. Preserv-

ative medicine is better than the medicine that cures you after you have been ill. That is why our Father recommends all superiors before entering on their office to recollect themselves first by some days of retreat. And it is a good thing to do the same when we are going to undertake a long and important mission; of this Christ our Redeemer gives us the example, Who before commencing to preach recollected Himself for forty days in the desert. Also a time of tribulation and distress, whether private or particular, or general distress of the whole Church or of the whole order, is a very good occasion for this; for to put in more prayer and more penance and mortification has always been a usual practice in the Church to appease God and obtain His mercy.

All these are good occasions to recollect oneself in these exercises. But it is not necessary to go seeking occasions. Our own need and interest should urge us to desire and bring this about many times; at least no year should be let pass without our taking these spiritual vacations. And when it is done, it should be done in earnest and with all our heart; for a thing of such consequence as this should nowise be done for form's sake or as a compliment to others or to save appearances. The Lord has given this means very particularly to the Society, not only for our own advantage, but also for the aid and profit of our neighbor; so the bulls of our institution set this down as one of the principal means which the Society has to aid its neighbor. And this is another chief reason why our Father wishes that we should make much use of these exercises, and puts it into the Constitutions and into the Rules of Priests that we should be very dexterous in the use of this kind of arms so profitable for the gaining of souls. These are his words: "In giving the Spiritual Exercises to others after having had experience of them in himself, let each one have practice and know how to give an account of them and aid himself with this arm, since we see that God our Lord makes

it so effectual for His service." By this means our Lord gained our blessed Father Ignatius; by this He gained his companions; by this since then so many others have been gained as well within as outside of the Society: and in both the one and the other we have seen that the Lord concurs with marvelous effect to their end, as with a means given so directly from His hand. Thus we should have great confidence that thereby He will help us also and bestow on us great blessings.

Another main consideration to help and animate us to this is the singular favor and grace which His Holiness Paul V has done in this particular to all religious in the bull and constitution which he published on the twenty-third of May in the year 1606, the first of his pontificate, declaring the indulgences that religious enjoy; where he grants a plenary indulgence and remission of all sins to all religious, of whatsoever order they be, who recollect themselves for the space of ten days to make these spiritual exercises, every time they make them. In this is seen the esteem which His Holiness has of this practice, and which we should have. And for the consolation of all I will set down the pontiff's very words: "To those who by permission of their superiors shall put away their other business and for ten days remain in their cells, or separated from the conversation of others, and attend to the reading of pious books and other spiritual things apt to lead the mind to devotion and spirituality; adding frequent considerations and meditations on the mysteries of Catholic faith, on the benefits of God, on the four last things, on the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and other exercises of ejaculatory or vocal prayers; exercising themselves in mental prayer for at least two hours day and night; making at the same time a general confession or an annual confession or an ordinary confession and receiving the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist or celebrating mass; every time they make these said Exercises, We mercifully grant in the Lord a plenary indulgence and remission of all sins."

CHAPTER XXVI

Of the Fruit That We Should Gather When We Betake Ourselves to These Exercises

ON three things particularly we should set our eyes, to gain them from the Exercises. The first is to renew ourselves in the ordinary things that we do every day and perfect ourselves in them, since all our advancement and perfection consist in doing these ordinary things and getting them well done. Let no one think that making the Exercises consists merely in recollecting oneself for eight or fifteen days, spending much time in prayer. All *that* is only that one may come out of retreat with a habit established of making one's meditation better, of observing the additions and instructions given to make it well, of making one's examens well, of saying or hearing well mass and divine office, of making one's spiritual reading with fruit, and so of all the rest. To this end does a man disengage himself for a time from other occupations to exert and practise himself in doing these things well, that he may come out renewed and accustomed to do them so and ready so to do them in the future. Thus our Father says that during the whole time of the Exercises, which is a month when they are made in their entirety, the particular examen should be kept on the observance of the additions and the diligent and exact fulfilment of the Spiritual Exercises, noting the faults that are committed regarding the one and the other, that so the exercitant may become habituated and accustomed henceforth to do all these things right well. And he repeats this many times, as understanding well the great means of self-improvement therein contained. And not only in regard of spiritual duties, which are the main-spring that should give force to all the rest, but in all duties and occupations, the exercitant should come forth improved by the Exercises, drawing from them support henceforth to do his office better and his ministries, and to keep the rules.

Thus the fruit of the Exercises is not for those days of retreat, but mainly for the time that follows. It is when a man comes forth from the Exercises that we are to see the benefit of them in his works.

The second thing that we are to aim at gaining from the Exercises is to overcome ourselves and mortify ourselves in regard of certain evil tendencies and imperfections that we have. Let each one set his eyes on those things in which he is prone most ordinarily to go wrong or to be the cause of others' going wrong by the offense and disedification that he gives them, and contrive to come forth from the Exercises amended on this point; and then he will have made the Exercises right well, for that is what they are particularly for, and that is their end. The title which our holy Father prefixes to the Spiritual Exercises is the following, in the original Spanish: "Spiritual Exercises, for a man to overcome himself, and order his life without being determined by any affection that is inordinate." *Exercicios espirituales para vencer à si mismo, y, ordenar su vida, sin determinarse por afeccion alguna que desordenada sea.* This means that one should aim at coming out of the Exercises altered and transformed into another man. *And thou shalt be changed into another man*, said Samuel to Saul (I Kings x. 6)—*into a perfect man*, says St. Paul. (Eph. iv. 13). It should be seen in a man's subsequent proceedings that he has made the Exercises. If before he was a lover of talking and losing time, let it be seen that now he is a lover of silence and recollection; if before he was a lover of comfort and his own ease, let it be seen that now he is a lover of mortification and penance; if before he spoke biting words, that henceforth he speaks them no more; if before he was lax and careless in the observance of rules and made no account of little things, that from this time forth he is very obedient and very exact and takes account of things quite small and minute and by the grace of the Lord does not fall into any deliberate fault. For if a man

is to continue exhibiting the same evil propensities and faults and come out just as he went in, what is the good of the Exercises?

St. Ambrose (De Poenitentia ii. c. 10) has a story of a young man; and as he tells it, we may tell it also. This young man had gone wrong. He had occasion to take a long journey, and during that time he changed his mind. He came back to his native town and, meeting his former companion, he gave her a wide berth. She was surprised; and thinking that he had not recognized her, she went up to him and said: "I am Harriet." He replied: "But I am not Harry." He was a changed man. In this way we should change and transform ourselves so as to be able to say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I*, not I that lived of old under the Law, and persecuted the Church, *but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20). And this, says St. Ambrose, is what Christ our Redeemer means by saying: *If anyone will come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24); let him change himself into another man and contrive not to be what he used to be. Of our Father Francis Borgia it is related in his Life how he conveyed the body of the empress to Granada, how the Lord there gave him great light and opened his eyes to the vanity of the world by that spectacle of death which he had before him, and how on his return to court, as he says, he seemed to find the court quite changed. It was himself that had been changed and transformed by the knowledge and enlightenment that God had given him. In this way, then, we should come out of the Exercises with the new light and awakening to reality that the Lord is wont to impart in them.

The third thing that we should set our eyes on to gain from the Exercises follows from the former; it is the gaining of some virtue and some point of perfection, particularly that which we are in greatest need of; for the rooting out of vices is done to plant virtues in their stead. "Two things," says that holy man (Thomas à Kempis),

“aid much to advancement; the one is to turn away with a vigorous effort from what one’s nature is viciously inclined to”—here you have the former thing insisted on—“and to labor earnestly for the virtue that is most wanting to us”—which is this third thing. So the Directory to the Exercises, treating (Chapter 6) of the way in which we of the Society should make use of them, observes that we should not spend all the time on the first week, two or three days being sufficient for that, but should pass on to the other meditations which involve greater perfection.

Among other suggestions there made is this, that from time to time we should take up some leading rules in which are contained all the perfection we could desire; as the rule that says that, as worldly men love and seek with great diligence honors, fame, and the repute of a great name upon earth, so we should love and intensely desire the contrary. Take to heart in retreat the gaining of this perfection and the attainment of this degree of humility, that you rejoice as much under ignominies and affronts, under injuries and false testimonies, as worldly men rejoice in honor and reputation. If you do that, you will remain master of many strivings and foolish impulses that usually come in our way, to being held in honor and repute, one man for his learning, another in the discharge of his office, another in his ministrations and management of business—trifles that get in the way and greatly impede our spiritual perfection. Take to heart another time the rule that says: “Let all in all things endeavor to serve and please the Divine Goodness purely for Itself, rather than for fear of punishments or hope of rewards.” Try to attain to this purity of intention, that you seek not your own interest in anything, neither little nor great, neither temporal nor eternal, but in all things desire purely the will and glory of God, that being your satisfaction, forgetful of yourself and of your own advancement and convenience. Take to heart another time the gaining of a most perfect conformity to the will of God,

taking all things that occur, great and small, in whatever manner and by whatever way or means they come, as coming from the hand of God. On these and the like points of perfection we should fix our gaze when we go into retreat to make the Exercises, and not stop till we do gain them.

CHAPTER XXVII

Some Directions That Will Help Us to Profit More by These Exercises

TO make better profit of the Spiritual Exercises and gather from them the fruit that we have said, it is to be observed, first, that, as we have said above, when a man sets about meditation, not only should he have arranged beforehand the points that he is to meditate on, but also the fruit that he is to gather therefrom. So, also, on being about to make the Exercises, a man must bring prepared in detail what he is to gather from them. Before going into retreat he must look and consider with himself very leisurely and attentively: "What is the greatest spiritual necessity that I have?" "What is that to which my vicious nature or my passions or my evil habits most incline me?" "What is it that makes war on my soul?" "What is there in me that may offend and disedify my brothers?" And this is what he must keep before his eyes to get from the Exercises and to resolve effectually to amend. This is a very good preparation for entering on the Exercises. And it must be observed that, when one goes into retreat, one should not fix one's eyes on the attainment of a very high prayer, nor think that by shutting himself up in retreat he is to have at once easy access to God with much quiet and attention; for it may be that he will have more distractions, more disturbances and temptations, than he had in his offices and ministries; but he must put before his eyes the gaining of what we have said, and make a resolution thereon in all earnestness. That gained, he will make a

good retreat, though he may not have the devotion that he desired; and if that is not gained, though from the beginning to the end he melted in tears and devotion, he will not have made a good retreat, for that is not the end of retreat, but the other.

That direction also will be a great help which our Father gives us and wishes us always to observe in meditation; that as soon as the hour of meditation is over, the exercitant, for the space of a quarter of an hour or thereabouts, sitting or walking up and down, should make an examination of his meditation and take account how he has succeeded in it; and if it has gone badly, let him look into the cause thereof; let him look and see whether he had the exercise well prepared beforehand, whether he gave way to strange and irrelevant thoughts, whether he let himself be overcome by sleep, whether he dwelt excessively in speculation of the understanding, whether his heart was languid and remiss at meditation, whether he took no pains to exercise affections of the will, whether his intention was not as pure as it should have been, seeking rather consolation than the divine will. And if he finds he has been at fault, let him repent thereof and purpose amendment henceforth; but if he finds that the thing has gone well, let him return thanks to God our Lord and contrive to do things in the same manner in the remaining meditations.

This instruction is of great importance because, in the first place, by means of this examination and reflection on how one has got on at meditation, a person gains experience how things go badly and how they go well, to avoid the one and follow the other; thus spiritual discernment is acquired, and that mastery of the subject that springs from experimental knowledge. On this account our Father set much store by this examination and reflection as a means to make us masters, not only in this, but also in our other exercises and ministries. So he says in the Fourth Part of his Constitutions that it will be a great help to a con-

fessor to do his office well if, after he has heard a confession, he makes reflection to see and consider if he has committed any fault in that confession, especially if he is a beginner, to correct himself another time and by dint of blundering learn to hit well. For this end, also, is made the examination of meditation. Meditation is so valuable, and it so much behooves us to get into the way of making it well, and steadily to banish the faults that we commit in it, that our Father, not content with the examen that we are wont to make every day at noon and night, would have us examine our meditation on the spot immediately after concluding it.

The second thing that we have to do in this examination of our meditation, and a very important thing, must be to see what was the fruit that we have drawn therefrom and apply ourselves to drive it home anew, as when people repeat a lecture and draw out in black and white its conclusions and truths and make a sort of epitome of them. So much account must be made of this examination that, when one cannot find time to make it after the meditation, it should be made in the meditation itself at the end of it.

We may add here another point, which is this, that it will be a good plan for a man to note down what he gathers from the meditation, putting in writing, not at length, but briefly, the desires and purposes that he draws from it and also some truths and illustrations or discoveries of error which the Lord is wont to give therein, sometimes concerning certain virtues, sometimes concerning the mysteries meditated. Such we read to have been the practice of our first Fathers, our blessed Father Ignatius and Father Peter Faber, and we have some things of theirs that they wrote thereon. Father Francis Xavier also was accustomed to do the same, as we read in his Life; and in the Directory to the Exercises this advice is also given. Also our Father General Claudius Aquaviva recommends it to us in the "Industriae" that he wrote, treating of meditation. And

besides the fact that thereby our purposes and desires are brought more to a head, we find by experience how profitable it is for a man to read these things long afterwards; for, being his own, and he having felt them as they stand, they make more impression on him than other things, and he readily comes to appreciate them again; and seeing that since that time he no longer comes up to that point he had then attained and instead of advancing is going back, he is ashamed at no longer being what he once was. Thus either he is animated to go back to the old standard of perfection or at least to make up by shame for his falling short of perfection. So this practice will always be profitable, particularly at the time of the Exercises.

Lastly, I say that if ever there is a time when it is good to give an account of one's conscience and of one's prayer to some spiritual man, as we shall say afterwards, it will be at this time particularly; and for not humbling themselves to this some do not gather the fruit that they should gather from the Exercises.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Of Spiritual Reading, How Important It Is, and of Sundry Means That Will Help Us to Make It Well and Profitably

READING is the sister of prayer and a great aid thereto. So the Apostle Paul advises his disciple Timothy to attend to it. *Attend to reading* (I Tim. iv. 13). Of such importance is this spiritual reading for anyone who is trying to serve God that St. Athanasius says in an exhortation to his religious: "You will find none in earnest about his spiritual progress who does not give time to spiritual reading." St. Jerome in his letter to Eustochium strongly recommends her to give herself to this holy reading: "Let sleep creep over you," he says, "holding a book, and let the sacred page receive your drooping face"—*Tenenti codicem*

somnus obrepat, et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat. All the saints greatly recommend this spiritual reading, and experience well shows us how profitable it is, since histories are full of the great conversions which the Lord has wrought by this means.

Because this reading is such a chief and important means for our advancement, the founders of religious orders, resting on the doctrine of the Apostle and the authority and experience of the saints, have ordained that their religious should make spiritual reading every day. Of the blessed St. Benedict, Humbertus says that he ordered that every day there should be a set time for this reading; and along with that he ordered that at that time two of the most ancient monks should go round visiting the monastery to see if there was anyone who left the duty out or hindered the rest. Thereby will be seen what importance he attached to it; and, by the way, it will also be understood that these visits, which it is customary to make every day here in religion during spiritual duties, are founded on the teaching and experience of the saints of old. For the first and second time St. Benedict ordered that the delinquent should be corrected mildly; but if he did not amend, that they should correct him and give him such a penance that the rest should fear and take warning. In the Society we have a rule for this spiritual reading, which says: "Let all twice a day give the time that is appointed for examen of conscience, prayer, meditation, and reading with all diligence in the Lord;" and the superior and prefect of spiritual things take care that everyone should always set aside some time for this. And speaking generally, this is a means commonly used by all who aim at virtue and perfection; and so that all may practise it with greater fruit, we will mention some things that will help thereto.

St. Ambrose, exhorting us to give to prayer and spiritual reading all the time we can, says: "Why do you not fill up with reading or with prayer all the spare time you have?"

Why do you not go to visit Christ our Lord and converse with Him and hear Him? For when we pray, we converse with God; and when we read, we listen to God"—*Deum alloquimur cum oramus: illum audimus cum divina legimus oracula*. Let this, then, be the first means to make profit of spiritual reading, to make account that God is speaking to us and telling us that which we read there. St. Augustine also assigns this means: "When you read you should make account that God is telling you what you read, not merely that you may know it, but that you may fulfil and put it in execution." And he adds another very good and devout consideration. "Do you know," he says, "how we should read Holy Scripture? As when a person reads letters that have come from his native country, to see what news we have of heaven. We should read to see what the Scriptures have to tell us of our native land, where we have our parents and brethren, our friends and fellow citizens, and where we are desiring and sighing ourselves to be."

St. Gregory says that Holy Scripture—and the same may be said of any other spiritual reading—is as a looking-glass put before the eyes of the soul that therein we may see our interior, the good and evil about us, the progress we are making, or how far we are from perfection. These good books tell us sometimes of the admirable doings of the saints to animate us to imitate them, that seeing their great victories and triumphs we may not be discouraged at our own temptations and trials. At other times they recount to us not only their virtues, but their falls, that by the one we may know what we have to imitate and by the other what we have to fear. So they put before us at one time a Job who rose like the crest of a wave to temptation, at another time a David who was overthrown thereby, that the one may animate us to confidence in the midst of trials and the other may make us humble and afraid in the midst of successes and consolations, that we should never have a secure confidence in ourselves, but walk always with great

caution and reserve. So says St. Augustine: "You will, then, read Holy Writ to the best advantage if you use it as a mirror to see therein the image of your soul, striving to correct and remove whatever is there reprehended as unsightly and evil and to adorn and beautify it with the examples and virtues that you read of there."

But, coming down more into detail as to the manner we should adopt herein, it is to be observed that for this reading to be profitable, it must not be done hastily or at a gallop, as when one reads stories, but very leisurely and attentively; for as an impetuous flow of water and a heavy shower does not penetrate or fertilize the earth, but gentle small rain; so for reading to enter and be drunk in by the heart, the reading must be done with pausing and pondering. And it is good, when we find any devout passage, to dwell on it a little and make there a sort of station, thinking over what is read and trying to move the affections of the will in the way that we do at meditation. At meditation, indeed, this is done more leisurely; we dwell more on things and ruminate and digest them more; but it should also be done in its way at spiritual reading. So the saints advise, and say that spiritual reading should be like the drinking of a hen, that drinks a little and then lifts up its head, and once more again drinks a little and again lifts up its head.

Hereby is seen how reading is sister and companion to meditation; so much so that, when we wish to start a person at mental prayer and would go with him little by little according as the disposition of the person requires, we counsel him first of all to read devout books, making in the reading proper stations and pauses, as has been said; for thereby the Lord is often wont to raise a person to mental prayer. And also in the case of others, who cannot get into meditation and fancy they can make nothing of it, they are usually advised to take some book and join prayer with reading, reading a little and meditating and praying

thereupon and then again reading a little; for in this way the understanding being, as it were, tied to the words of the reading, it finds no room to pour itself out in divers imaginations and thoughts as it did when it was free and loose. Thus we may combine meditation with reading. This is why the saints so much recommend spiritual reading, giving it almost the same praises and commendations that they give to meditation. They say it is the spiritual food of the soul, making her strong and steady against temptations; that it engenders in her good thoughts and desires of heaven; that it gives light to our understanding and inflames and kindles the will; that it drives away worldly sadness and causes true cheerfulness, spiritual and according to God, and other such things.

The blessed St. Bernard gives another admonition, how to make profit of spiritual reading. He says: "He who applies himself to reading should seek not so much science as savor"—*Non tam quaerat scientiam quam saporem*. Mere knowledge of the understanding is a dry thing if it does not reach the will, feeding the affections and nourishing devotion; for that is what makes reading juicy and fruitful, and is the end and purpose thereof. This is a very important admonition, since there is a great difference between reading for knowledge and reading for spiritual advancement, between reading for others and reading for oneself; the former is study, the latter is spiritual reading. If in reading you set your eyes on knowing things or on gathering matter for subsequent preaching or talking to others, that will be studying for others, and not spiritual reading for your own advancement. There will be other times for that. *Everything has its time* (Eccles. iii. 1). The time of spiritual reading is not for that, but for what we have said.

The saints also recommend us not to read much at one sitting, nor get through many pages, not to weary the spirit with lengthy reading instead of refreshing it; very good

and necessary advice for certain persons who seem to place their happiness in reading much and getting through many books. As the body is not nourished by much eating, but by good digestion of what one does eat; so neither is the soul nourished by reading much, but by ruminating and well digesting what is read. For the same reason they say also that spiritual reading should not be of difficult things, but of plain things, rather devout than difficult, since difficult things are apt to fatigue and dry up devotion. Hugo of St. Victor quotes an example of a servant of God who was admonished by revelation to drop the reading of those things, and read the lives and martyrdom of the saints and other plain and devout things, whereby he profited much.

St. Bernard goes on again to say: "Something of our daily reading should every day be taken down into the stomach of memory, there to be more minutely digested, and thence again brought up and ruminated again and again—something to our purpose, something that makes for the end we have in view, something to engage our attention so that it may have no inclination to wander away to strange ground." As we do not eat our daily meals simply for pastime, but that on the strength of the sustenance we take we may be able to work all that day and all our life long; so our reading, which is the food and spiritual sustenance of the soul inasmuch as it is the words of God, is not meant merely to give us good occupation for the time of reading, but to profit us all the day after. To this end it will be a good practice, before we begin to read, to raise our heart to God and beg this grace that we may drink in and well take to heart what we read, thereby to become more earnest in pursuit of virtue, more disabused of error, more determined to do what behooves us. So we read that blessed Gregory was wont to prefix prayer to his reading and say: *Depart from me, ye malignant, and I will search into the commandments of my God* (Psalm cxviii. 115).

That we may set a higher value on this reading and animate ourselves the more to it, the saints compare spiritual reading with hearing the word of God and say that, though reading has not the liveliness of the living voice, it has other advantages which sermons have not. In the first place, a preacher cannot be at hand at all times like a good book. Secondly, a happy saying of a preacher passes off into the air and so cannot have so great an effect upon me; but a good thing said in a book may be turned over again and again, ruminated and pondered, and so take greater effect. Thirdly, in a good book I find a good and outspoken counselor; for, as a philosopher said well, what at times a friend or adviser dare not tell me, a book will tell me fearlessly, and warn me of my vices and defects, scold me and exhort me. Fourthly, by reading I enter into conversation with those who have written the book; at one time I can go and have a period of conversation with St. Gregory, at another time with St. Basil, at another with St. Chrysostom, hear them and listen to what they say, as if I were then their disciple. So they say, and with good reason, that good books are a public treasure for the great benefits and riches that we can draw from thence.

Finally, such are the advantages and profits that follow from spiritual reading that St. Jerome, treating of the inward fire of the soul, asks: "Where is this fire?" and answers: "Doubtless, in the Holy Scriptures, by the reading whereof the soul is set on fire with God and purified from all vices." And he quotes to this effect what the disciples said, when Christ our Redeemer had appeared to them on the road to Emmaus: *Was not our heart burning within us, while he spoke to us on the way, and laid open to us the Scriptures?* (Luke xxiv. 32). And to the same effect the psalmist: *The utterances of the Lord are holy utterances, silver tested by fire* (Psalm xi. 7). And St. Ambrose: "That the reading of Holy Writ is life, the Lord Himself witnesses, saying: *The words that I have spoken*

to you are spirit and life (John vi. 64).” Therefore, that we may live a spiritual life and walk always in the spirit, inflamed with the love of God, let us give ourselves much to spiritual reading and practise it in the manner that has been said.

Hence it follows that they do ill who, once having read a good book, throw it into a corner and say: “I have done with that.” A good book is not meant to be read once over only; the second time over it will do you more good, and the third time more, and so you will ever find it new, as they find by experience who have a desire to profit. That is a very good thing also which some do; when they find anything in a book that moves them much and gives them particular satisfaction they take a note and mark it, to have always at hand some arguments of greater weight and cogency, matter wherein they are more likely to find some marrow of devotion and consolation suitable to the several times and occasions that occur.

Out of many examples of the good of spiritual reading, I will borrow one from St. Augustine that is very instructive. St. Augustine, then, tells the story how an African knight named Poticianus came one day to pay him a visit and gave him news of the wonders that were publicly related of the blessed St. Anthony. He went on to say that one afternoon, when the emperor was in the city of Treves, taken up with witnessing certain public games which were being celebrated there, himself and three friends belonging to the court went out for a stroll in the country. Two of them, apart from the rest, went into the cell of a monk and found there a book in which was written the life of St. Anthony. One of them began to read it; and suddenly, his heart set on fire with holy love and disgusted with himself, he said to his friend: “Tell me, I pray, what is it that we aim at gaining with all our labors that we undergo, fighting so many years in so many wars? Can we possibly come to any better fortune in the palace than to be what is called

within the inner circle of the emperor? But in that state what is there that is not precarious and fraught with great danger? And is it to this so great danger that we are making our way through heaven knows how many other dangers? But if I want to be a friend of God, I can be so at once." Saying these words, in labor with the birth of a new life within him, he cast his eyes once more on the book, and underwent an inward change and was detached from all the things of the world, as appeared at once; for, after he had done reading, great waves of emotion rose in his heart, and he said with a deep sigh to his friend: "Now I am quiet and at ease; I have renounced our hopes and expectations and am determined to serve God, and from this hour I mean to stay in this place; if you do not care to imitate me, do not try to divert me from my purpose." The other answered that he could not separate from him, nor cease to bear him company in the hope of such a reward. So they both began to raise the spiritual edifice and follow Christ at the due cost, which was the abandonment of all things. And what was no less wonderful, both were married, and their wives, when they heard of the case, consecrated themselves to God and made a vow of virginity. St. Augustine relates this story, and it was to him a very moving example, so much so that on the spot he cried out to a friend in great excitement of mind, saying: "What are we doing? What is this that you have heard? The unlearned rise up and carry off the kingdom of heaven, and we with all our learning are being plunged into the abyss!" So complaining and so feeling, the saint says that he went into a garden that he had there and threw himself under a fig tree and gave free vent to his tears. With great anguish and trouble of heart he began to say: "How long, O Lord, how long art Thou going to be displeased with me? Is there to be no end to Thy anger? Remember not, O Lord, our former iniquities!" And he went on repeating time after time these words: "How long? How long?"

Tomorrow, tomorrow. Why not today? Why not today put an end to my turpitudes?" And saying this with great emotion, he heard a voice which said to him: "Take and read; take and read." Then he says he rose to take up a holy book that he had by him to read in. For he had heard of that same Anthony, that upon one reading of the Gospel which he happened to hear, which said: *Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come follow me, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven* (Matt. xix. 21), he had determined to leave all things and follow Christ. Moved by this example and still more by the voice that he had heard, he says he took the book and began to read in it; and there and then God poured upon him such a great light that he left all things in the world and gave himself entirely over to the service of God.

SIXTH TREATISE

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD



CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of This Exercise and the Great Benefits That It Contains

SE**EEK** the Lord with strength and perseverance, says the Prophet David; *seek his face ever* (Psalm civ. 4). The face of the Lord, says St. Augustine, is the presence of the Lord. Thus to seek the face of the Lord ever, is to walk ever in His presence, turning the heart to Him with great desire and love. St. Bonaventure says that to walk always in this exercise of the presence of God is to enter on the bliss of heaven here on earth, since the bliss and happiness of the saints consists in seeing God continually without ever losing sight of Him. Since in this present life we cannot see God clearly as He is—that is proper to the blessed—let us at least imitate them in such way as we can and our frail nature allows, by striving to be ever regarding, looking up to, and loving God. As God our Lord has created us to stand eternally before Him in heaven and enjoy His presence there, so He would have us here on earth attain to some first sketch and outline of that blessedness by ever walking in His presence, looking up to Him and reverencing Him, albeit in the twilight. *Now we see in a glass darkly, but then face to face* (I Cor. xiii. 12). That clear vision is the reward and glory and blessedness that we hope for; this dim twilight apprehension is the meritorious means whereby we are to arrive thither. But, after all, we do imitate the saints in such fashion as we can, trying never to lose sight of God in the actions which we do. The saints and angels who are sent to our aid to guard and defend us, discharge these ministries in such a way as never to lose sight of God. So said the Angel Raphael to Toby: *I seemed to eat and drink with you, but I used another invisible food, and another drink that cannot be seen by men*

(Tob. xii. 19), being sustained by God. *The angels ever see the face of my Father who is in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 10). We in like manner, though we eat and drink, converse and deal with men, and seemingly are altogether taken up therewith, ought to contrive that that should not be our food and entertainment, but another invisible food that men see not, which is ever to be regarding and loving God and doing His most holy will.

Great was the exercise which the saints and those holy patriarchs found in walking ever in the presence of God. *I kept the Lord ever before my eyes, because he is ever at my right hand that I may not slip* (Psalm xv. 8). The Royal Prophet was not satisfied with praising God seven times a day, but he aimed at keeping God ever before him. This exercise was so continual with those holy men that their common manner of speech was: *As the Lord liveth, in whose presence I stand* (III Kings xvii. 1). Great are the benefits and advantages which follow from walking ever before God, considering that He is looking at us; and therefore the saints made such efforts in that direction, since that is enough to secure a man's behaving in a very orderly and very proper manner in all that he does. Otherwise, tell me, what servant is there whose behavior is not quite correct in presence of his master? What servant so bold as in presence of his master not to do what the master bids him, or dare to offend him to his face? What thief would dare to steal, seeing the judge looking on hard by? But God is looking at us: He is our Judge, He is all-powerful, He can make the earth open and swallow down to hell the man who offends Him; who shall dare to offend such a God? And so St. Augustine: "When I consider, O Lord, that Thou beholdest me always and watchest over me night and day with as much care as if in heaven and on earth Thou hadst no other creature to govern but myself alone; when I consider well that all my actions, thoughts, and desires lie open clearly before Thee, I am all full of fear

and covered with shame." Certainly we are under great obligation to live justly and righteously from the consideration that we do all things under the eyes of a Judge Who sees all things and from Whom nothing can be hidden. If here the presence of a grave personage puts us on our good behavior, what should the presence of God do!

St. Jerome, on the saying of God to Jerusalem by the Prophet Ezechiel, *Thou hast forgotten me* (Ezech. xxii. 12), says: "The remembrance of God banishes all sins." St. Ambrose says the same. And in another place St. Jerome says: "The remembrance of God and the walking in His presence is such an efficacious motive that we should never do anything to displease God if we remembered that He is present and beholds us." For Thais, the sinner, this thought was enough to make her give up her evil life and go into the desert to do penance, as we have said above (Treatise V, Chapter 16). Holy Job said: *Are not all my ways under his eyes, and does he not count all my steps?* (Job xxxi. 4). God is looking at me as an eyewitness, and is counting my steps; who should dare to sin or to do any duty badly?

On the other hand, all the disorder and perdition of the wicked come from their not remembering that God is present and is beholding them; this is what Holy Scripture goes repeating many times, speaking in the person of the wicked: *There is none that seeth me* (Isaias xlvii. 10): *He will not see our ways* (Jerem. xii. 4). St. Jerome has noted this in the twenty-third chapter of Ezechiel, where the prophet reproaches Jerusalem with many vices and sins, and sums up the cause of them all in the fact of her having forgotten God. And the same cause is assigned in many other passages of Scripture. As a horse without a bridle, and a ship without a rudder, goes upon rocks and destruction; so when this bridle is removed, man is carried away by his disorderly appetites and passions. *He keepeth not God before his eyes*, says the Prophet David, *nor sees him present*

before him, and therefore his ways, that is, his works, are stained with faults at all time (Psalm ix. 5).

As for the blessed St. Basil, the remedy that he gives in many places for all temptations and troubles and for all untoward events and occasions that may occur, is the presence of God. Thus, if you want a brief and compendious method of attaining perfection, a method that contains and embraces in itself the strength and efficacy of all other methods, here it is; and therefore God taught it to Abraham: *Walk before me, and be perfect* (Gen. xvii. 1). Here as in other places of Scripture the imperative is taken for the future, to emphasize the infallibility of success. It is so certain that you will be perfect, if you live always looking at God and observing that He is looking at you, that from that point you may give yourself out for such. For as the stars from the aspect of the sun, which they have present and to which they look, draw light to shine within and without themselves, and virtue to influence the earth; so just men, who are as stars in the Church of God, from the aspect of God, from seeing Him as present and turning their thought and desire to Him, draw light whereby they shine with true and solid virtues in their interior, which God sees; and on the exterior, which men see, they shine with all decency and comeliness and draw virtue and force to edify and advance others. There is nothing that illustrates so well the need that we have of keeping ever in the presence of God as this comparison. Mark the dependence that the moon has on the sun and the need that it has of keeping ever before it. The moon of itself has no light, but only what it receives from the sun according to the aspect wherewith it regards it. It works on sublunary bodies according to the light which it receives from the sun, and so the effects wrought on them wax and wane according to the waxing and waning of the moon. And if any object gets in front of the moon, so as to disturb the aspect and sight of the sun, in that instant at once the

moon is eclipsed and loses its light and splendor, and withal a great part of its efficacy to work, which it holds by means of the light. The soul stands in the same relation to God, Who is its sun.

This is why the saints so much recommend to us this practice. St. Ambrose and St. Bernard, speaking of the constancy and perseverance which we should have in it, say that, as there is no instant or moment in which man does not enjoy the bounty and mercy of God, so there should not be any instant or moment in which he does not keep God present in his memory. *Sicut nullum est momentum quo homo non utatur vel fruatur Dei bonitate et misericordia, sic nullum debet esse momentum quo eum praesentem non habet in memoria.* And elsewhere St. Bernard says: "In all his actions and in all his thoughts the religious should endeavor to remember that he is in the presence of God; and all the time that he is not thinking of God he should hold for lost. God never forgets us; it would be right that we should try never to forget Him." St. Augustine on the verse, *I will fix mine eyes upon thee* (Psalm xxxi. 8), says: "Lord, I will not turn my eyes away from Thee, since Thou never turnest Thine from me." And the prophet: *Mine eyes are ever fixed on the Lord* (Psalm xxiv. 15). St. Gregory Nazianzen says our remembrance of God should be as often and as frequent as our breathing, and even more: *Non tam saepe respirare quam Dei meminisse debemus.* For as we need to breathe to refresh the heart and temper the natural heat, so we need to have recourse to God in prayer to restrain the disorderly ardor of concupiscence, which keeps stimulating and exciting us to sin.

CHAPTER II

In What This Practice of Walking Always in the Presence of God Consists

THAT we may be able better to profit by this practice, it is necessary to explain in what it consists. It consists in two points, that is, in two acts, one of the understanding, the other of the will. The first act is that of the understanding, which is always required and presupposed for any act of the will, as philosophy teaches. The first thing, then, must be to consider with the understanding that God is here and in every place, that He fills the whole world, that He is whole in the whole, and whole in every part and in every creature, how small soever it be. Of this we should make an act of faith, since this is a truth that faith proposes for our belief. *He is not far from each one of us, since in him we live and move and have our being* (Acts xvii. 27-28). You must not imagine God as far from you or outside of you, since He is within you; "I sought, O Lord," says St. Augustine, "outside of me Him Whom I held within me." He is within you. God is within me with a more intimate and inward presence than that whereby I am in myself; in Him we live and move and have our being. It is He Who gives life to all that lives, and strength to all that has power, and being to all that has being. But for His sustaining presence all things would cease to be and fall back into nothing. Then consider that you are in God, surrounded and encompassed by God, swimming in God. Those words, *Heaven and earth are full of thy glory* (Isaiah vi. 3), are very good words to express this.

Some may help themselves further herein by considering the whole world full of God, as indeed it is, and imagining themselves in the midst of this infinite sea of Godhead, surrounded and encompassed therewith as a sponge would be in the midst of the sea, all soaked and full of water within and all surrounded and encompassed with water on

all sides without. And this is not a bad comparison for our limited understanding, though it falls far short and wants much of declaring what we mean. For this sponge in the midst of the sea, if it rises up, strikes the surface and if it sinks down, strikes the bottom and if it is carried to one side or the other, it strikes the shore; but in God there is nothing of that. *If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I go down into hell, thou art there; if I take wings in the morning, and fix my abode on the furthest verge of the sea, there also thy hand shall guide me and thy right hand shall hold me* (Psalm cxxxviii. 8-10). There is no end or boundary to God, for He is immense and infinite. And, further, as the sponge after all is a body, it cannot be entirely penetrated by the water, which is another body; but we are entirely and all throughout penetrated by God, Who is a pure spirit. But, after all, these and other like comparisons, though they fall short, are helpful and good to give us to understand in some sort the infinite immensity of God and His intimate presence within us; and therefore St. Augustine alleges them.

Nevertheless, it is to be observed on this practice that, to realize this presence of God, it is not necessary to form any idea or representation of God by means of the imagination, fancying that He is here at our side or in any other definite place, or to imagine Him as having such or such form and figure. There are those who imagine Jesus Christ our Redeemer in front of them or by their side, and that He goes with them and is ever looking at them in all that they do, and in this manner they walk always in the presence of God. And of these, some imagine they see before them Christ crucified, others as bound to the pillar, others in the prayer in the Garden, sweating drops of blood, others in some other stage of the Passion or in some joyful mystery of His most holy life, according to what strikes each of them most; or at one time they imagine Him in some stage, at another in another. And although this is very

good, if it can be done, yet commonly speaking it is not what is best for us, since all these figures and imaginations of bodily things are wearisome and fatiguing and go far to break people's heads. A St. Bernard and a St. Bonaventure must have known how to do this sort of thing differently from us, and find in it much ease and relief. Thus they entered into those gaping wounds of Christ and found their way into His side, and that was their fortress and their refuge and their place of repose, thinking they heard those words of the spouse in the Canticles: *Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come, my dove who dwellest in the holes of the rock and in the hollow of the wall* (Cant. ii. 13-14). At other times they imagined the foot of the Cross planted in their heart, and received in their mouth with the greatest sweetness some drops of the blood that ran and streamed from the fountains of the Savior. *Ye shall draw waters with joy from the fountains of the Savior* (Isaias xii. 3). It was all very well for these saints to do this, and they found much good in the exercise; but if you were to try to spend the whole day in these considerations and in this presence of God, you might carry on in this manner for one day or one month, but you would lose a whole year of prayer because you would break your head over it.

The reasonableness of this remark will well appear from this fact. Even for making the composition of place, which is one of the preludes to meditation whereby we try to render present to ourselves the subject of our meditation, imagining the event actually to be happening before our eyes, writers on prayer observe that the imagination must not be drawn on too much in representing the shape of these corporeal things thought of, lest you break your head and come in for other awkward consequences and illusions that may happen thereby. Now if for a prelude to meditation, which is done in so short a time, calmly and at leisure, without involving anything else that requires attention, so much wariness and caution is necessary, what must it be

to endeavor all day long and in the midst of other occupations to preserve this composition?

But this presence of God which we speak of here, excludes all these imaginations and considerations and is very far removed from them, since in the first place it is not necessary to feign that He is here, but to believe it, since such is the truth. Christ our Redeemer, inasmuch as He is man, is in heaven and in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, but He is not in every place; and so when we imagine Christ present as man, it is an imagination that we frame to ourselves; but as God He is present here and in me and in every place; He fills it all. *The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the round of the earth* (Wisdom i. 7). We have no need to imagine what is not, only to rouse ourselves and believe what is. Secondly, the humanity of Christ our Lord may be imagined and figured by the imagination, since He has a body and a figure, but God as God cannot be imagined or figured as He is, for He has neither body nor figure, but is a pure spirit. Even an angel we cannot imagine as he is, nor our own soul either, for it is a spirit; how much less can we imagine or visualize God as He is!

But how are we to consider God as present? I say that we can do no more than make an act of faith, presupposing that God is here present without seeking to know how or in what manner, as St. Paul says Moses did: *Invisibilem tanquam videns sustinebat*—"God being invisible, he considered and held him present as if he saw Him (Heb. xi. 27), without seeking to know or imagine the way in which He is. It is as when one converses with a friend at night, without dwelling on the manner of his presence nor remembering that at all, but simply rejoicing and delighting in the conversation and presence of such a friend. In this manner we must consider God as present; it is enough to know that God is here as our friend to rejoice in Him. Stay not to look how He is present, a thing that you will never make out, because it is now nighttime for us. Hope for the day dawning; and when the morrow of the next life comes, then

God will discover Himself, and we shall be able to see Him clearly as He is. *When he shall appear, then we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (I John iii. 2). Therefore did God appear to Moses in the cloud and shade, that you may not see Him, but only believe that He is present.

All that we have said so far belongs to the first act of the understanding, which must be presupposed. But we need to observe that the main part of this exercise does not consist in that; for not only must the understanding be occupied in beholding God present, but the will also must be occupied in desiring and loving God and uniting itself with Him; and in these acts of the will this exercise chiefly consists, of which we shall speak in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III

Of the Acts of the Will, in Which This Exercise Chiefly Consists, and How We Are to Practise Them

ST. BONAVENTURE in his "Mystical Theology" says that the acts of the will whereby we are to raise up our hearts to God in this holy exercise are ardent desires of the heart, wherewith the soul desires to unite herself to God in perfect love. They are inflamed affections; they are lively sighs which we heave from our innermost being, crying thereby to God; they are pious and loving affections of the will, spiritual wings, as it were, by which the will takes flight, extending itself upwards, rising farther and farther to union with God. These vehement and inflamed desires and affections of the heart are called by the saints "aspirations" because by them the soul lifts itself up to God, which is the same thing as to aspire after God; and also, as St. Bonaventure says, in the same way as by breathing we heave out breath from the interior of our body without thinking about it, so without thinking or almost without

thinking, we heave out these inflamed desires from the interior of our heart. A man gives expression to these aspirations and desires by short and frequent prayers, which are called ejaculations, "thrown out rapidly"—*rap-tim iaculatas*, says St. Augustine, because they are as fiery darts and arrows coming forth from the heart and in an instant shot out and sent up to God. The monks of Egypt, as Cassian says, made great use of these prayers and set great value on them, partly because, being short, they do not tire the head, and again because, being made with fervor and elevation of spirit, they find their way in an instant into the presence of God and leave no room for the devil to disturb him who makes them, nor raise any obstacle in the heart. St. Augustine says some words worthy of the consideration of authors who treat of prayer: "That watchful and lively attention, which is necessary to pray with due reverence and respect, is not here relaxed and lost, as commonly happens in long prayers." By means of these ejaculatory prayers those holy monks succeeded in continually keeping up this exercise, lifting up their hearts very frequently to God, treating and conversing with Him.

This method of walking in the presence of God is commonly more appropriate for us, easier, and more profitable; but it will be needful to explain more at length the practice of this exercise. Cassian puts it in this verse: *Come unto my aid, O God; O Lord, make haste to help me* (Psalm lxix. 2), which the Church repeats at the beginning of every canonical hour. At the beginning of every business that has any danger in it, beg God to help you to come well out of it, using these words. In all things we need the Lord's favor and therefore we should be always asking it. Cassian says that this verse is marvelously well suited to express our sentiments in whatsoever state or occasion or happening we see ourselves. By it we invoke the help of God; by it we humble ourselves and acknowledge our need and misery; by it we brace ourselves up and trust in being

heard and favored by God; by it we kindle in ourselves the love of the Lord, Who is our refuge and protector. For all the combats and temptations that may come in your way, you have here a strong shield, an impenetrable coat of mail, an impregnable wall. Thus you should ever have this ejaculation on your mouth and in your heart; it should be your perpetual and continual prayer and your means of walking ever in the presence of God. St. Basil puts the practice of this virtue in taking occasion of all things to remember God. Do you eat? Give thanks to God. Do you dress? Give thanks to God. Do you walk out into the field or the garden? Bless God, Who has created it. Do you look up to the sky? Do you look at the sun and all the rest? Praise the Creator of it all. When you sleep, every time you awake, bless God.

Others, seeing that in the spiritual life there are three ways—one purgative, for beginners; another illuminative, proper to those who are making progress; a third unitive, proper to the perfect—assign three sorts of aspirations and ejaculatory prayers. The first is for those whose object is to obtain pardon for their sins and to rid their soul of vices and earthly affections; and they belong to the purgative way. The second is for those who are aiming at gaining virtues and overcoming temptations and embracing difficulties and labors for virtue's sake; and they belong to the illuminative way. The third is for those who aim at attaining to the union of their soul with God by the bond of perfect love; and they belong to the unitive way. These authors wish each one to practise this exercise according to the state and condition in which he finds himself. But, as for that, however perfect anyone may be, he may well exercise himself in sorrow for his sins and begging God's pardon for them and grace never more to offend Him, and that will be a very good exercise and very pleasing to God. And he who is engaged in cleansing his soul of vices and disorderly passions and gaining virtues, may all the same

exercise himself in love of God in order to gain that same end with greater ease and sweetness. And all may practise this exercise, sometimes with these acts: "O Lord, would that I had never offended Thee;" "Never permit me, Lord, to offend Thee;" "To die, yes, but not to sin;" "May I rather die a thousand deaths than fall into mortal sin." At other times one may raise up one's heart to God, giving Him thanks for benefits received, general and particular, or begging for sundry virtues, now a profound humility, now obedience, now charity, now patience. At other times one may raise one's heart to God with acts of love and conformity to His most holy will, as by saying: *My beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16); *Not my will, but Thine be done* (Luke xxii. 42); *What is there for me in heaven, and away from thee what have I desired on earth?* (Psalm lxxii. 25). These and the like are very good aspirations and ejaculatory prayers to enable one to walk always in this exercise of the presence of God. But the best and most effectual are generally those that the heart conceives of itself when moved by God, though they be not couched in words so well composed and orderly as those that we have quoted. Nor is it necessary, either, to have a multitude and variety of these prayers, since one single ejaculation repeated frequently and with great affection may suffice for one to carry on this exercise many days and even for a whole lifetime. If you find you get on well with ever saying those words of the Apostle: *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6), or those of the spouse, *My beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16), or those of the prophet, *What have I, O Lord, to desire in heaven or earth but thee?* (Psalm lxxii. 25), you need no more; stay and entertain yourself therein, and let that be your continual exercise of walking in the presence of God.

CHAPTER IV

*Further Explanation of This Exercise, and a Method of
Walking in the Presence of God Very Easy and
Profitable and Leading to Great Perfection*

AMONG other aspirations and ejaculatory prayers that we may use, the chiefest and most suitable for the practice of this exercise is that which the Apostle teaches: *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever else ye do, do all for the glory of God* (I Cor. x. 31). Now you eat, now you drink, now you do something else—do all for the glory of God. Contrive in all things that you do, as frequently as you can, to lift up your heart to God, saying: “For Thee, O Lord, I do this, to satisfy and please Thee, because Thou so willest it; Thy will, O Lord, is my will, and Thy satisfaction my satisfaction; I will nothing and reject nothing but what Thou willest or rejectest; this is all my joy and all my satisfaction and delight, the accomplishment of Thy will, to please and satisfy Thee; I have nothing else to wish or desire, or set my eyes on, in heaven or on earth.” This is an excellent way of living ever in the presence of God, very easy and profitable and carrying high perfection, since it is living in the continual exercise of the love of God. Here I will only add that this is one of the best and most profitable methods there are, of all that we can take up, of living in perpetual prayer. Nothing else would seem to be wanting to conclude and canonize and extol this exercise but to say that thereby we shall practise that continual prayer which Christ our Lord asks of us in the Gospel: *We must always pray, and never give up* (Luke xviii. 1). For what better prayer can there be than to be ever desiring the greater glory and honor of God, ever conforming oneself to His will, willing nothing and rejecting nothing but what God wills and rejects, and placing all one’s joy and satisfaction in the joy and satisfaction of God?

Therefore a doctor says, and with good reason, that he who shall persevere diligently in this exercise of these inward affections and desires will derive such benefit from them that in a short time he will feel his heart vastly altered and changed and will find in himself a particular aversion for the world and a singular affection for God. *Ye are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints and domestics of the house of God* (Eph. ii. 19). This is beginning to be citizens of heaven and henchmen of the house of God. These are those lords in waiting that St. John saw in the Apocalypse, who had the name of God written on their foreheads, that is, the continual memory and presence of God. *And they shall see his face, and have his name written on their foreheads* (Apoc. xxii. 4), for all their dealing and conversation is now no longer on earth, but in heaven. *Fixing our gaze not on the things that are seen, but on the things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal* (II Cor. iv. 18).

It is to be observed in this exercise that when we make these acts, saying: "For Thee, Lord, I do this, for Thy love, and because Thou so requirest," and the like, we should make them and say them as speaking to God present and not as lifting up our heart and thought far away from ourselves and out of ourselves. This observation is of great importance in this exercise, because this is properly walking in the presence of God, and this it is that makes this exercise sweet and easy and moves and profits us more. Even in other prayers, when we meditate on Christ on the Cross or at the pillar, writers on prayer advise us not to imagine this taking place there in Jerusalem, a thousand or so many years ago, because that is more wearisome and not so impressive; but we must imagine it in the present, going on there before our eyes, and that we hear the blows of the whips and the hammering in of the nails. And if we meditate the exercise on death, they say that we should imagine

that we are now to die, given up by the doctors, and with the blessed candle in our hand. How much more reason will there be in this exercise of the presence of God to make the acts that we have said, not as speaking with one absent and away from us, but as speaking with God present, because the exercise itself requires it, and in sober truth it is so.

CHAPTER V

Of Some Differences and Advantages Which This Particular Exercise of Walking Always in the Presence of God Has over Others

TO evidence the perfection and profit of this particular exercise and further to declare the same, we will mention some points in which it differs, and differs for the better, from other methods. In the first place, in other methods which some are wont to bring forward of walking in the presence of God, all seems to be an act of the understanding and all seems to end in imagining God present; but in our method the act of understanding and of faith in God's presence is presupposed, and the soul passes on to make acts of the love of God, wherein our exercise principally consists; and it is clear that this is better and more profitable than the former. As in prayer we have said that we should not dwell on the act of the understanding, that is, the meditation and consideration of things, but on the act of the will, which consists in affections and desires of virtue and of the imitation of Christ, and this should be the fruit of the prayer; so here the principal thing in this exercise, and the best and the most profitable, lies in the acts of the will, and that is the thing we ought to lay stress on.

The second conclusion that follows is that this act is easier and pleasanter than the others because in the others there is need of discussion and labor of the understanding and imagination to set things forth and represent them—

a thing that is apt to weary people and break their heads, and so cannot be kept up so long; but in this exercise there is no need of such discussion, but solely of affections and acts of the will, which are made without fatigue. For, though it is true that there is here also some act of the understanding, yet that is presupposed by faith without our fatiguing ourselves over it; as, when we adore the Blessed Sacrament, we presuppose by faith that Christ our Savior is there, yet all our attention and occupation is in adoring, reverencing, loving, and asking favors of the Lord Whom we know to be there. So it is in this exercise. And by reason of its being easier one can hold on and persevere in it a longer time. So even with sick people who cannot otherwise make their prayer, we are wont to counsel them to raise their heart to God repeatedly with some acts and affections of the will, because that they can do with ease. Thus, though there were no other advantage in this exercise but this of our being able to hold on and persevere in it longer than in others, we should value it much; how much more, seeing that there are in it so many other advantages.

The third and principal thing, and a thing much to be taken notice of, is that the presence of God is not merely for us to dwell upon, but a means for us to do our ordinary actions well. If we were to content ourselves with merely paying attention to God as present, and thereby grow negligent in our duties and commit faults in them, that would be no good devotion, but an illusion. We must always make up our minds that, though with one eye we deal with His Divine Majesty, we are to fix the other on doing our works well for Him. The reflection that we are in the presence of God should be to us a motive for doing well and with greater perfection all that we do; and this is done much better by this exercise than by others. In other exercises the understanding is much occupied with those corporeal figures which we endeavor to set before us and by the thoughts that we seek to draw from what is before us. Now to draw

out a good thought, a man often does not look well at what he is doing and so does it badly; but this exercise, involving no occupation of the understanding, nowise hinders the doing of our duties, but rather is a great aid to our doing them well, because we are doing them for the love of God and before God, Who is looking at us. So we endeavor to do them in such manner and so well that they may be fit to appear before the eyes of His Divine Majesty and have nothing in them unworthy of His presence.

SEVENTH TREATISE

ON THE EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE



CHAPTER I

The Importance of Examination of Conscience

ONE of the principal and most efficacious means for our spiritual advancement is examination of conscience, and as such the saints recommend it. St. Basil, who was one of the earliest instructors to give rules for monks, commands them to make this examination every night. St. Augustine in his rule commands the same. St. Anthony Abbot taught and commended it much to his religious; so do St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure and Cassian and commonly all. The blessed St. Chrysostom, on those words of the Royal Prophet David: *Have compunction and shame for your sins upon your beds* (Psalm iv. 5), treats of this examination and advises its being made every night before we go to bed, for which he gives two good reasons. The first for the day following, that we may find ourselves better disposed and prepared not to sin nor to fall into the faults into which we have fallen today, because today we have examined ourselves and repented of them and made a purpose of amendment, which clearly will be a check upon us not to commit them again on the morrow. The second for the day itself; even today it will be some check upon us to have to examine ourselves at night, for the consciousness that we have to render an account and have our conduct overhauled that same day, will make us behave advisedly and live with greater reserve. As a master, says St. Chrysostom, does not allow his steward to fail to give in his accounts day by day, that there may be no chance of his being careless and forgetful and his reckoning's thereupon going wrong, so also it will be reasonable for us to call ourselves to account every day, that negligence and forgetfulness may not throw the accounts out.

St. Ephrem and St. John Climacus add a third reason, and say that, as diligent merchants every day make a computation and reckon the losses and gains of that day and if they find any loss, are very careful to make it up; so we should every day examine and take account of our losses and gains, that the loss may not go on increasing and swallow up the capital, but may be made good and remedied at once. St. Dorotheus adds another great advantage, which is that by dint of examining ourselves and pulling ourselves up every day for our faults, the vice and passion does not take root in us and grow into a habit and evil custom. On the other hand, they say of the soul that is not careful to examine herself that she is like the vineyard of the sluggard, of which the Wise Man says: *I passed by the field of the sluggard and the vineyard of the fool, and lo, it was all full of nettles, and the ground covered with thorns, and the stone wall was broken down* (Prov. xxiv. 30). Such is the soul that makes no account of examining her conscience; she is like an uncultivated vineyard, full of brambles and briars. This evil earth of our flesh never ceases to send up sundry evil weeds, and so it is ever necessary to go, hoe in hand, hoeing and rooting out the weeds and tares that are sprouting. The examen serves this purpose of a hoe, to make a clearance and root out the vice and evil propensity that was beginning to sprout, and not let it go farther or take root.

Not only the saints but even the heathen philosophers knew by the light of natural reason the importance and efficacy of this means. That great philosopher Pythagoras, as St. Jerome and St. Thomas relate, among other instructions that he gave to his disciples, gave them this as a main point, that everyone should have two times marked out, one in the morning and one at night, at which to examine himself and take account of three things—What have I done? How have I done it? And what have I left undone of what I ought to do?—rejoicing over what was good, and

grieving over what was evil. Seneca, Plutarch, Epictetus, and others recommended the same.

Our blessed Father Ignatius, resting on the doctrine of the saints and on reason and experience, recommends to us examination of conscience as one of the chiefest and most effectual means that we can employ on our part for our improvement. And he gave us a rule thereon: "Let it be their practice every day to examine their consciences." And elsewhere he says that this should be done twice a day. And in some sort he esteemed this examination more than meditation because by the aid of examen we put in execution the resolutions we drew from meditation, to the mortification of our passions and the extirpation of our vices and defects. And so much account is made of it in the Society that we are called to it twice a day by sound of the bell, once in the morning and again at night, and we are visited at examen as at meditation, that none may omit making it either in the morning or at night. And our Father was not content that we ourselves should practise this examination, but he would have us persuade those with whom we deal to do the same. So the good workmen of the Society, in dealing with anyone, at once teach him to make the general examination of conscience and also the particular examen in order to get rid of any bad habit—such as swearing, lying, cursing, or the like. Such was the practice of our first Fathers, as we read of Father Peter Faber that this was one of the first devotions that he gave to those with whom he dealt. And we read of our blessed Father that, not content with giving this method of the particular examen to anyone whom he wished to cure of any vice, he took means not to let him forget to put it in practice. He made him before dinner and before bedtime give an account to some confidential agent whom he assigned to him, and tell him if he had made the examen, how he made it, and whether he had made it in the manner appointed. And we know also that he kept his first

companions for a long time with no other support than that of examinations of conscience and frequentation of the sacraments, thinking that, if that was done, it would be quite enough to preserve them in virtue.

Hence we should gather great esteem and appreciation of this practice of examining our consciences twice every day, as being a most important and efficacious means towards our spiritual progress. We should accordingly practise it every day, and the day that we fail therein we should consider that we have failed in one of the chiefest points of our religion. We should hold no occupation sufficient to justify our omitting this examen; and if through any unavoidable occupation we have not been able to make it at the appointed hour, we should take care to make it as soon as possible, say, the first thing of all after dinner. Even sickness and indisposition, which is sufficient to excuse us from any long prayer, should not excuse us from making our examens. Thus it is right for all to hold as a first principle that the examens must never be omitted, neither the general nor the particular. An invalid has plenty of matter on which to make his particular examen; for instance, on conforming himself to the will of God in the sickness and pains that He sends and the remedies ordered by the doctor, which sometimes are more painful than the illness itself; or on bearing with patience the neglect that he fancies people have of him; or on being indifferent and resigned to live or die as God pleases.

CHAPTER II

On What Subjects the Particular Examen Should Be Made

WE have two examens in the Society, one particular, the other general. The particular examen is made on one subject only; the general is made on all the faults that we have committed that day in thought, word, and

deed; and that is why it is called general, because it embraces all. We will speak first of the particular examen and then say briefly what is to be added concerning the general, because many things have to be done alike both in general and in particular, and what shall be said of the particular will serve also for the general. We will deal with two things concerning this examen: first, on what subjects it should be made; secondly, how it should be made.

Touching the first point, that we may understand to what subjects we should principally apply this examen, there is to be carefully noted one rule and direction that our Father gives in his book of Spiritual Exercises, and he has it from St. Bonaventure. He says that the devil conducts himself towards us like a commander who is minded to attack and capture a city or fortress. He goes about with all diligence to reconnoiter first of all the weakest point of the fortification, and there he concentrates all his artillery and employs all his forces, though it be at the risk of great loss of life; because if he can batter that part down, he is sure to gain an entrance and take the city. So the devil takes measures to reconnoiter in us the weakest part of our soul, to assail and overcome us there. This, then, should serve as a warning to us to be beforehand and on our guard against our enemy. We must look at and recognize attentively the weakest part of our soul, the part most destitute of virtue, which is that to which natural inclination or passion or bad custom or evil habit most carries us, and there we must keep better watch and ward. The saints and masters of spiritual life say that this should be our chief endeavor, with special care and diligence to root out from within us this vice, because this is where our want is greatest, and chiefly to this we should apply the particular examen.

Cassian gives two reasons for this; the first is that this weakness it is that generally puts us into the greatest dangers and makes us fall into the greatest faults, and there-

fore it is reasonable that we should apply there our greatest care and diligence. The second is that once we have conquered and subdued our strongest enemies, that make the most serious war upon us, we shall easily overcome and strike down the rest. The soul is braced up and strengthened by the sense of triumph and victory, and the enemy proportionately weakened. Cassian quotes to this effect the example of certain games that formerly took place in Rome in presence of the emperor, where they brought out many wild beasts for men to fight with; and they who wished to signalize themselves more and give pleasure to the emperor, made first for that animal which they saw to be the strongest and most ferocious, reckoning that when that was conquered and dead, they should have an easy triumph over the rest. So he says we should act. We see by experience that commonly each one has a sort of "King Vice" that carries him away for the great inclination that he has to it. There are certain passions that are called predominant, which seem to lord it over us and make us do what otherwise we would not do. So you hear some people say: "If I had not this, I think there is nothing that would embarrass me or give me trouble." This, then, we should attend to most in our particular examen.

In the war that the king of Syria waged against the king of Israel, Holy Scripture tells us (I Chron. xviii. 30) that he gave command to all the captains of his army not to fight against anyone, great or small, but only against the king of Israel, thinking that in overcoming the king he overcame his whole army. And so it turned out; for, when King Achab was struck with an arrow, shot at random on the chance of hitting someone, the battle was over. That is what we have to do; overcome this "King Vice," because thereupon all the rest of his crew will readily give in; cut off the head of this giant Goliath and at once all the other Philistines will be routed and fly. This is the best general rule for everyone to understand on what he ought to make this examen.

But in particular one of the best pieces of advice that can be given in this matter is for everyone to confer with his confessor and spiritual father, having first given him an entire account of his conscience, of all his inclinations, passions, affections, and bad habits, without there remaining anything that he does not lay open; for in this way everyone's need and particular circumstances being seen and understood, it will be easy to determine on what point it will be proper to make the particular examen. And one of the principal things that are to be mentioned in giving an account of conscience is on what the particular examen is made and what profit is derived from it, as is laid down in the Rules of the Prefect of Spiritual Things, and the instruction we have on this subject. It is very important for everyone to succeed in making the particular examen on what is most suitable for him. As a physician has effected not a little, but a great deal, when he has diagnosed the root of the illness, because then he will hit upon the right remedies, and the medicines will take effect; so we have achieved not a little, but a great deal, if we hit upon the root of our infirmities and ailments, because that will be to hit upon the cure of them by applying the remedy and medicine of the examen. One of the reasons why many make little profit of their examen is because they do not apply it where they ought to apply it. If you cut the root of the tree and tear up the weed by the roots, all the rest will soon wither and die; but if you go for the branches and leave the root, it will soon sprout and grow again.

CHAPTER III

Of Two Important Pieces of Advice How to Hit Upon and Choose the Right Subject for Particular Examen

COMING down more to particulars, two principal things are to be noted here. The first is that, when there are exterior faults that offend and disedify our brethren, that

is the first thing that we should try to abolish by means of the particular examen, even though there be other interior things of more importance. Thus, if one has a fault in conversation, either by talking too much, or speaking impatiently and angrily, or uttering words of detraction that may give one man a bad opinion of another, or the like, reason and charity require that we should first get rid of these faults that are apt to offend and disedify our brethren and contrive to live and converse with them in such manner as to give no one cause of complaint against us. So the holy Gospel says of the parents of the glorious Baptist: *They were both just before God, living in the observance of all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord without blame* (Luke i. 6). They were just before God and lived blamelessly before men. This is great praise of a servant of God, and one of the things that a religious living in community should endeavor to make sure of. It is not enough to be just before God, but you must try to make sure that your way of going on in religion be such that none may have any ground of complaint against you. *Without blame*; so that none may have to say of you: "A very good fellow but for so-and-so." So, if there is anything that may give offense, it is there that the particular examen should start.

But in the second place it is to be observed that we must not go our whole life making particular examen on these exterior things, for they are easier and more in our power than the interior. St. Augustine says very well: "I command my hand, and it obeys me: I command my foot, and it obeys me; but I command my appetite, and it obeys me not." It is clear that hand and foot are more obedient than appetite, since they have no proper motion of their own to the contrary such as appetite has. So we must endeavor to get clear of these exterior things as soon as we can, and have done with them, that we may have time over for other and greater things, as to gain some main

virtue or some higher perfection—a most profound humility of heart, not only to the extent of thinking meanly of oneself, but going so far as to rejoice that others think meanly of one and hold one of small account; doing things purely for God, so far as to come to say what that holy cook said: “I never think that I am serving men, but serving God” (Treatise III, Chapter 9); a great conformity to the will of God in all, and so of the rest. For, though it is true that the particular examen is properly and directly for the getting rid of faults and imperfections—and there is always in us store enough of matter for that, since so long as life lasts we cannot be without faults and venial sins—yet we must not go all our life at that. The time is very well spent that is taken up in weeding the flower garden, yet it must not be all spent in clearing the soil of noxious and evil growths, but rather the purpose of this clearance is to plant good flowers. So the time is very well spent that is taken up during examens in rooting up the vicious and evil inclinations of our soul, but the purpose of all that is to plant therein good and fragrant flowers of virtues. *Behold, I have set thee up today to root up and destroy, to plough over and eradicate, and to build and plant*, said God to Jeremy (Jer. i. 16). The first thing must be to break up and root out, but after that to build and plant.

Especially, since even for getting rid of these same faults and imperfections it is sometimes well to make the particular examen on some higher virtue or perfection; this is often a more effectual means thereto, as well as a shorter and more pleasant. Have you the fault of speaking to your brethren in an offhand manner and too freely? Make your examen on taking all to be your betters and yourself for the least of all. That will tell you how you should address them and how you should reply to them; you may rest quite assured that you will not speak to them any rough or biting word if you attain to this humility. In the same way, do you feel repugnance and difficulty in trying circum-

stances that occur? Make your examen on taking all things that happen as coming from the hand of God and by a particular arrangement and providence of His, and that He sends them to you for your greater good and profit; and in this way you will do well under them. Do you fail in modesty, lightly rolling your eyes about and turning your head from one side to another, or being curious in wanting to know the news and inquiring into everything that passes? Make your examen on walking in the presence of God and doing all things in such sort as they may appear to His august countenance, and you will soon find yourself modest, recollected, and spiritual; and that without any fatigue or seeming to lay much stress on the point. Otherwise look how, when you come out from a devout prayer, you have no mind to talk or look about you, because dealing and conversing with God makes you forget all that sort of thing. But if you wish to take and remedy all these exterior faults one after another, besides its being a very long and round-about way, you will find that, when you want to make examen, say, on modesty of the eyes, you will not be able to make it and your head will ache in trying to put such restraint on yourself. So a doctor finds fault with those spiritual directors who spend all their energies in warning you against those exterior faults; he says that the chief care of a good master and pastor of souls should be to reform the heart and make his disciple enter into himself, as Holy Scripture says of Moses: *He led his flock into the interior of the desert* (Exod. iii. 1). Busy yourself in reforming the heart, and everything else will soon be reformed.

CHAPTER IV

That the Particular Examen Must Be Made on One Thing Only

THE particular examen must always be made on one thing only, as the name itself implies. And the reason why it is proper to do so is that in this way the method is more effectual than if we made it on many things together; for it is clear, and natural reason teaches, that a man can do much more against one vice by itself than by taking many together, for he who clutches at much, grasps little. This manner of overcoming our enemies, that is, our vices and passions, Cassian says, was taught us by the Holy Ghost instructing the children of Israel how to behave against those seven tribes and nations opposed to them, to overcome and destroy them. *Thou canst not overcome them all together, but little by little God will give thee victory over them all* (Deut. vii. 22). Cassian observes, as though answering a tacit objection, that there is no fear lest, when a man turns his attention against one vice alone and gives his chief care to that, the rest may do him much harm. First, because this very care taken to correct one particular vice will cause in his soul a great horror and abhorrence of all other vices for the common motive on which they all agree; thus going forearmed against them all. Secondly, because he who goes about his particular examen with care to root out that one evil thing, thus cuts at the radical tendency there is in the heart to all other evil things, which is the license of letting oneself go after anything and everything that one likes. Thus the making of the particular examen against one vice is fighting against all vices, since this check and vigilance employed on one particular serves also for the rest. We see in the case of a wild horse how drawing the bridle and giving him the check, that he may not be unruly and run disorderly down one way, serves also that he may not run dis-

orderly down other ways. Add to this a third consideration, that every day also we make another examen, a general examen, which embraces all the rest.

So far must the principle be carried of not making the particular examen except upon one thing alone, that even in dealing with one vice or one virtue it is many times, and indeed most commonly, better to divide it into parts and degrees, and to go little by little applying the particular examen first to one part or degree and then to another, so to be able better to attain the end desired; for if we were to take it in general, all in a heap, we should effect nothing. Thus, if one wishes to apply the particular examen to the rooting out of pride and vanity and the gaining of humility, he must not take it in general thus: "I intend to be proud in nothing, but humble in all things," for that comprises much; indeed, it would be attempting more than if you were to make your particular examen on three or four things together, and so there would be little gained for your clutching at too many things. What you have to do is to divide it into parts or degrees. In this way the enemies, being divided and taken one at a time, will be better overcome and we shall come to gain more expeditiously what we desire.

For the better putting of this in practice, we will set down here some main things on which the particular examen may be made, dividing them into parts and degrees. And though for some virtues, we have done this in special treatises, yet, that it may be found all together in this its proper place, we will gather it together here; and we may also use it as a pattern and mirror in which we may look and see whether we are getting on and what is wanting to us to gain perfection.

CHAPTER V

*How to Divide the Particular Examen According to the
Parts and Degrees of Virtues**Of Humility*

I. To utter no words that may redound to my own praise and reputation.

II. Not to take pleasure in hearing myself praised and well spoken of, but rather thence to take occasion to humble and confound myself more, seeing that I am not such as others think or such as I ought to be. To this may be added rejoicing when another is praised and spoken well of. And when I feel any resentment at this, or any movement of envy, to note it for a fault; as also when I take any vain complacency or satisfaction at others' speaking well of me.

III. Never to act from human respect or to gain the good opinion of men or to be seen and esteemed by men, but purely for God.

IV. Never to excuse myself, much less throw the blame on others, whether in outward word or in my own mind.

V. To cut off and lop away at once all vain, arrogant, and proud thoughts that occur to me from things that touch my honor and reputation.

VI. To take all others for my betters, not speculatively merely, but practically and in act, behaving to all with that humility and respect which I show to superiors.

VII. To take well the occasions of humility that come in my way. In this I should go on growing and advancing by these three steps: (1) taking such occasions patiently; (2) taking them readily and promptly; (3) taking them cheerfully and with joy. And I must not stop until I come to be glad and rejoice in being disparaged and held in small account, to resemble and imitate Christ our

Redeemer, Who chose to be disparaged and held in small account for me.

VIII. In this matter and in others like it the particular examen may be applied to making acts and doing practices of humility—or of any other virtue on which the particular examen is made. These acts and practices may be either interior or exterior. We should rouse ourselves to these acts so many times in the morning and so many times in the afternoon. We should begin with fewer and gradually add more until the habit or custom is gained of this particular virtue we are in quest of.

Of Fraternal Charity

I. To shun detraction or any mention of the fault of another, even though it be slight and public. Not to pull to pieces his doings or show any sign of undervaluing him either in his presence or in his absence, but try to let it be that for anything that proceeds from my mouth all men are good, honorable, and estimable.

II. Never to tell another, "Jack says so-and-so of you," when the matter is such as might cause annoyance, however small it may be; for this were to sow discord and tares among brethren.

III. Not to utter sarcastic words or harsh and peevish words that might give pain to another. Not to be obstinate in maintaining a point, nor contradict another, nor rebuke him, unless you have charge of him.

IV. To treat all with love and charity and show it in act, trying to meet others' wants, assist and give them satisfaction so far as you can. This especially when you are in an office that obliges you to meet people's wants; to this you should give great attention, and whatever you cannot do in deed, make it up by a gracious manner and kind answers and words.

V. To avoid any aversion for another and still more to avoid showing it, as it would be by refusing to speak

to him for some displeasure you had conceived against him, or by refusing to meet his need when you might, or by giving any other sign that you have a grudge against him.

VI. Not to behave to any particular person as you would not behave to anyone else; to avoid familiarities and particular friendships that give offense.

VII. Not to pass judgment on anyone, but rather try to excuse your neighbor's faults, in your own thoughts and in company having a high opinion of all.

Of Mortification

I. To mortify myself in things and occasions that offer without my going to seek them, whether they come immediately from God or come by means of superiors or by means of neighbors and brethren or in any other way, trying to bear them well and profit by them.

II. To mortify myself and overcome myself in everything that is likely to hinder me from keeping my rules and doing my ordinary and daily duties well, spiritual as well as external; because all the faults that we commit therein come of our not overcoming and mortifying ourselves in a matter which takes some trouble, or of not abstaining from some pleasure and gratification.

III. To mortify myself in conducting myself with the modesty that is to be expected of a religious, especially as regards the eyes and tongue, when there might be any fault therein.

IV. To mortify myself in sundry things that I might lawfully do, as by not leaving my room, by not seeing some curious sight, by not asking about or seeking to know what is no affair of mine, by not saying things that I have a mind to say, and the like. I am to apply the examen to making these acts of mortification, so many in the morning and so many in the afternoon, beginning with fewer and gradually adding more, for the practice of these voluntary

mortifications, though it be in little things, is very profitable.

V. To mortify myself even in things that I am obliged to do, in this way: When I go to meals, to study, to lecture, to preach, or any other duty that I have a liking for, mortify first my appetite and will, saying in my heart: "I have no mind to do this, O Lord, for my own satisfaction, but because Thou wilt it."

Of Abstinence or Gluttony

I. Not to eat anything before or after the common hour nor away from the refectory.

II. To be content with what is given to the community, not seeking other dishes nor the same dishes differently dressed, not accepting special food except for some known necessity.

III. In these common things not to exceed the rule of temperance in point of quantity.

IV. Not to eat with great eagerness nor very hurriedly, but with modesty and decency, not letting appetite run away with me.

V. Never to speak of food, much less grumble or complain about it.

VI. To cut short and stop all thoughts of gluttony.

Of Patience

I. Not to give any outward sign of impatience, but rather to show great tranquillity in word and action and in the cast of my countenance, repressing all impulses and emotions to the contrary.

II. Not to give place and entry into my heart for any perturbation or resentment or indignation or sadness; much less any desire of revenge, though it be in a matter quite trifling.

III. To take all events and occasions that occur as sent by the hand of God for my good and profit, in whatever manner or by whatever means or channel they come.

IV. To go on exercising myself and bringing myself to act in this matter, first, by taking all things as they come with patience; secondly, with promptitude and readiness; thirdly, with delight and joy, as being the will of God.

Of Obedience

I. To be exact in outward obedience, leaving the letter of the alphabet just begun; meeting also the signification of the will of the superior without waiting for an express command.

II. To obey in will and heart, having one and the same wish and will as the superior.

III. To obey also with the understanding and judgment, adopting the same view and sentiment as the superior, not giving place to any judgments or reasonings to the contrary.

IV. To take the voice of the superior and the sound of the bell as the voice of God, and obey the superior, whoever he be, as Christ our Lord, and the same for subordinate officials.

V. To follow blind obedience, that is, obedience without inquiry or examination or any seeking of reasons for the why and wherefore, it being reason enough for me that it is obedience and the command of the superior.

VI. To go on to acts of the will, exciting myself to believe, when I obey, that I am therein doing the will of God, and make that all my joy and satisfaction.

Of Poverty

I. Not to give or receive from another, either within or without the house, anything without leave.

II. Not to borrow or take anything from the house or the room of another without leave.

III. Not to keep anything superfluous, stripping myself of all that is not necessary to me, as well in books and the furniture of my room as in dress and food and everything else.

IV. Even in the necessary things of which I have the use, I must make a point of showing myself a poor man, because such I am; contriving that my things be the poorest, the plainest, and of least value. Thus, in my room, in my dress, in my food, and in all the rest, the virtue of poverty is ever to shine out and I am to let it be seen that I am a poor man; desiring and rejoicing that the worst of the house be ever for me for my greater abnegation and spiritual profit.

V. To rejoice that even in necessary things something is wanting to me, because this is to be a true and perfect poor man in spirit and an imitator of Christ our Redeemer, Who, being so rich and powerful (II Cor. viii. 9), made Himself poor for love of us. So do I wish to feel want even of necessary things, suffering hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, and nakedness.

Of Chastity

I. To practise modesty of the eyes, not looking at persons or things that may be an incentive to temptation.

II. Not to utter or listen to words touching on this matter or that may awaken movements or evil thoughts, nor read such like things.

III. To give no place to any thought bearing on this matter, though it be very remotely, casting them off with great diligence and promptness from the very beginning.

IV. Not to touch another person on his hands, and much less on his face or head, nor allow myself to be touched.

V. To observe with myself much decency and modesty, not looking at myself, uncovering or touching myself without absolute necessity.

VI. To have no particular friendships, neither giving nor receiving little presents or things to eat. And with persons who appeal to me and with whom I feel this affection and inclination, to go with great reserve, honestly shunning their intimacy and conversation, which is usually the only thing to be done in such cases.

Of Doing Ordinary Actions Well

I. Not to fail any day to do my spiritual duties completely, giving them the full time allotted to them; and when at that time there is some unavoidable occupation to claim me, to make it up at another time.

II. To make my meditation and my general and particular examens well, observing the additions and dwelling in my examens on sorrow and confusion for faults and purpose of amendment, rather than on examining how often I have fallen, for in this is the force and fruit of the examens, and for want of this some usually profit little thereby.

III. To do any other spiritual duties well, as mass, office, spiritual reading, and penances, as well public as private, taking care to gather from them the end and fruit for which they are severally ordained, not doing them out of custom, perfunctorily, and for form's sake.

IV. To do my office and discharge my ministries well, doing all that I can and all that rests with me that they may go well, as one who does things for God and in presence of God.

V. Not to commit any deliberate fault.

VI. To make great account of little things.

VII. And because my progress and perfection turns on doing well and perfectly these ordinary duties that we do

every day, I mean to be very careful from time to time, when I feel myself going slack upon this point, to make my particular examen on the same for some days, to renew myself and rehabilitate myself in doing them well.

Of Doing All Things Purely for God

I. Not to do anything for any human respect or to be seen and esteemed by men or for my own comfort or interest or simply to my own taste or satisfaction.

II. To do all my actions purely for God, accustoming myself to make actual reference of them all to God: first, in the morning when I awake; secondly, at the beginning of each action; thirdly, also during the action itself, often in it raising my heart to God, saying: "For Thee, O Lord, I do this, for Thy glory and because Thou so willest it."

III. To go on applying this particular examen and exciting myself to the same so many times in the morning, so many times in the afternoon, beginning with fewer and then adding more, until I come to gain a habit and custom of very frequently in my work raising my heart to God, and my eyes do not turn therein to regard anything but His Divine Majesty.

IV. I am not to stop in this examen and exercise until I come to do all my actions as one serving God and not men; and until I come to do them in such manner as to be always actually loving God in them, rejoicing that I am there doing His will, and all my joy and satisfaction is in that, so that, when I am at work, I seem to be rather loving than working.

V. This must be the presence of God in which I endeavor to walk, and the continual prayer which I seek to carry on; since it will be very good and very advantageous for my soul and will enable me to do things right down well and in perfection.

Of Conformity to the Will of God

I. To take all things and all occasions that offer, whether great or small, in whatsoever way and manner they come, as coming from the hand of God, Who sends them with the affection of a father for my greater good and profit; conforming myself therein to His most holy and divine will as if I saw Christ Himself saying to me: "Son, I wish that just now thou shouldst do or suffer this."

II. To contrive to go on growing and mounting in this conformity to the will of God in all things by these three steps: (1) to receive things with patience: (2) with readiness and ease: (3) with joy and gladness, this being the will and good pleasure of God.

III. I must not stop in this examen and exercise until I find in myself a sensible satisfaction and joy that the Lord's will is fulfilled in me, though it be with afflictions, contumelies, and pains, and until all my joy and satisfaction is the will and satisfaction of God.

IV. Never to omit doing a thing that I take to be the will of God and His greater glory and service, endeavoring therein to imitate Christ our Redeemer, Who said: *I ever do that which is most pleasing to my Eternal Father* (John viii. 29).

V. To walk in this exercise is a very good way to walk in the presence of God and in continual prayer, and very profitable.

VI. The examen on mortification that we have set down above may be better applied by way of conformity to the will of God, taking all events and occurrences as coming from the hand of God in the manner that has been said; and in this way it will be easier and of a better relish and more profitable, since it will be an exercise of the love of God.

It must be observed that we do not mean hereby to say that the particular examen is to be made in the order in

which the virtues are here set down, or by the degrees or parts that are assigned under each virtue. The rule to be observed here is that each one should choose the virtue of which he stands most in need and begin therein by that part or degree which is now necessary for him; and when he has done with that, he should proceed to select out of the rest what is most proper for him until he comes to the perfection of that virtue by the grace of the Lord.

CHAPTER VI

That the Matter of the Particular Examen Should Not Be Lightly Changed, and for What Length of Time It Is Well to Keep It on the Same Subject

IT is to be observed here that we must not lightly change the matter of the examen, taking now one thing, now another, for this is, as they say, to beat about the bush and get no forwarder. Our policy must be to follow up one thing right to the end and after that take up something else. One of the reasons why some people make so little profit by their examen is very often this, that they do nothing but by fits and starts, making the particular examen on one thing for a week or a fortnight or for a month and then getting tired and passing on to another thing without having gained the first, and then make another new start, and then another. One who takes it into his head to raise a stone up the slope of a mountain right to the top and, after lifting it some way, gets tired and drops it and lets it roll down to the bottom, will never succeed, however much he labors, in getting the stone to its place. So it is with those who begin to make their examen on one thing and, before bringing it to a head and gaining what they sought, abandon it and take another and then another. This is to tire yourself out without result, *always learning, and never arriving at knowledge of the truth* (II Tim iii. 7). In the business of perfection success is not won by fits

and starts, but by long perseverance. It is necessary to persist and take one thing to heart and hold to it until you have got it, though it be at great cost. St. Chrysostom says: As those who are digging for a treasure or mining for gold or silver cease not to hollow out and extract earth and remove all obstacles that come in the way and sink ten or twenty shafts until they strike on the treasure which they seek, so we, who are in quest of true spiritual riches and the true treasure of virtue and perfection, must not grow weary until we strike upon it, overcoming all difficulties, so that nothing may stand in our way. *I will pursue my enemies, says the prophet, and catch them up, and not be weary or turn back until they give in and I gain the victory over them* (Psalm xvii. 38). This holy persistence it is that overcomes vice and gains virtue, not fits and starts.

But let us now come to a reckoning. On how many subjects have you made your examen since you took the matter up? If you had succeeded in all, you would be a perfect man by this time. But if there is one in which you have not succeeded, why did you give it up? You will say that you were not getting on well with it. Now it is just for this reason that you do not get on well, because you keep changing and have not the perseverance to carry on any one thing to the end. If, making your examen and taking particular care over that thing, you say that you were not getting on well with it, you will get on worse when you do not make your examen on it. If he who makes resolutions often fails, what will become of him who seldom or never makes a resolution? Anyhow, this making a resolution morning, midday, and night, will be some check to prevent your falling so often. And though you fancy that you do not succeed in amending yourself and are doing no good, be not discouraged on that account and do not give it up, but humble yourself and be ashamed at examen time and turn to make new resolutions and start afresh.

For to this purpose God permits these failings, and suffers the Jebusite to remain in the land of your soul, that you may come to understand that you of your own strength can do nothing, but all must come from the hand of God, and so you may have recourse to Him and ever live attached to and dependent on Him. Under this trial a man is often more fervent and diligent in improving himself than he would be if God gave him at once what he desired.

But someone will ask: For how long a time will it be good to keep the particular examen on one thing? St. Bernard and Hugo of St. Victor treat this question: For how long a time will it be good to struggle against one vice? And they answer: Until the vice becomes so enfeebled that, as soon as it rises up in rebellion, you can at once easily put it down and reduce it to reason. Thus it is not necessary to wait until one no longer feels the passion or the repugnance, for that would be never to finish. Hugh of St. Victor says: That is more for angels than for men. It is enough that now this vice or passion is no longer very troublesome to you nor gives you much to think about, but that, as soon as it arises, you meet it and cast it from you with facility; then you may well stop the struggle and make the particular examen on something else. Even Seneca teaches us: "We fight against vices, not to overcome them entirely, but not to be overcome"—*Contra vitia pugnamus, non ut penitus vincamus, sed ne vincamur*. It is not necessary that we should not feel the vice at all; enough that it is now a beaten foe, so as to give us no more trouble nor disturb us in our course of well-doing.

To hit the mark better in this matter, it is well that everyone should talk it over with his spiritual father, for this is one of the chief things on which we need counsel. For some things it is enough to apply the examen for a short time, as we have said above. There are other things in which the examen may be well employed for a year or even many years; for "if every year we rooted out one vice,

we should soon be perfect men" (Thomas à Kempis). And there are things such that a whole lifetime would be well spent over one of them, for that would be sufficient for some particular man to attain perfection. Thus we have known persons who have taken to heart one thing and applied their particular examen to it as long as they lived, and so came to signalize in it and do it to perfection—one in the virtue of patience, another in a most profound humility, others in great conformity to the will of God, others in doing all things purely for God. In this manner, also, we should endeavor to come to perfection in some virtue, insisting and persevering in it until we gain it. This does not hinder our interrupting this examen sometimes; nay, it is well that so it should be done, turning to make the examen for a week on silence, on doing our spiritual duties well, on speaking well of all, of speaking no word that could in any way offend anyone, and on other such like things as are apt at times to sprout up within us and show their heads above ground. After that we may return at once to our post and follow out our principal purpose until we entirely succeed in our aim.

CHAPTER VII

How the Particular Examen Is To Be Made

THE second principal topic that we proposed to treat was how to make this examen. The particular examen embraces three times and an examination of oneself twice repeated. The first time is in the early morning at rising; everyone should then form a resolution to be on his guard against this or that particular vice or defect of which he wishes to correct and amend himself. The second time is at midday, at which the first examen should be made, which contains three points. The first is to ask grace of our Lord to remember how many times I have fallen into this defect on which I am making my particular examen; the second,

to take account of my soul touching this defect or vice, going over my conduct from the hour at which I arose and made my resolution to the present hour, and see how many times I have fallen therein, and make as many dots on a line of a little book, kept for that purpose, as shall answer to the number of times I find I have fallen; the third is to be sorry for having fallen, asking God's pardon for the same and purposing not to fall that afternoon into that fault, with the grace of God. The third time is at night before going to rest; then the examen must be made a second time, neither more nor less than at midday, by these three points, going through the time from the last examen until the present moment and making on the second line as many dots as shall answer to the number of times I find I have fallen. And to extirpate more easily and more readily this defect or vice on which we are making the examen, our Father puts three notices, which he calls "additions": the first, that every time the man falls into this particular vice or defect, he should repent, putting his hand to his breast, which can be done even in the presence of others without their noticing what is done; the second, that at night time, after having made the examen, he should compare the afternoon's dots with those of the morning, to see whether there is any improvement; the third and fourth, that he should also compare today with yesterday and this week with last week in reference to the same defect.

All this teaching is drawn from the saints. St. Anthony advised the writing down of the faults discovered by the examen, for the doer's greater shame and as an admonition to him to labor at their amendment. St. John Climacus would have us, not only at night and examen time, but at all hours, to note down immediately upon committing it any fault into which we fall, that thus the examen may be better made, as the good man of business and the good steward puts down in his day book at once anything that he

sells or buys so that nothing may be forgotten and that he may be better able to make up his account at night. St. Basil and St. Bernard expressly lay down the counsel to compare one day with another, in order to get a better idea of one's advancement or falling back, and diligently to aim at growing better every day and more like the holy angels. St. Dorotheus advises us to compare week with week and month with month.

The method that our Father lays down of taking the amendment of a fault time by time and little by little, half a day at a time and no more, is a method set down by St. Chrysostom, St. Ephrem, and St. Bernard, as most efficacious for the uprooting of any vice or fault. Even in the heathen world, Plutarch also prescribes it and gives the example of a man of a very choleric temperament, who had great difficulty in keeping his temper and took for his task not to get angry for one day; so he spent one day without getting angry, and another day he said: "Well, I don't mean to get angry today, either, not today at least." He did the same another day and another, until he came to make himself of a very sweet and agreeable disposition. Well, this is the way our Father instructs us in the particular examen, to make the effort easier for us. Dealing with an invalid who has lost his appetite, they give him his dinner little by little, that he may be able to eat it. If you put a whole chicken before him, he would think it impossible to have to eat all that and could not eat a mouthful; but cut off a little bit and give it him, and keep the rest there, hidden between two plates; in this way, little by little, morsel by morsel, you make him eat all that he needs. Our Father wishes in this way to help us with the particular examen, as they do with infirm and weakly people, little by little, half a day and half a day at a time, that we may be able to get on. If we took it all together—"All the year long I am not to talk;" "All my life I am to walk with my eyes cast down, under such control and with such modesty"

—the mere thought, perchance, would weary us and we should think it impossible to carry through. It would be a sad and melancholy life. But just for one half day, for one morning, till dinner-time, who would not be willing to go about with propriety and restrain his tongue? After mid-day you will make your resolution only for the afternoon; as for tomorrow, God has not pronounced what it shall be; and how do you know if you shall get as far? And if you do live so long as that, that is not more than one day either and you will not be sorry tomorrow to have spent today in such recollection; rather you will find yourself very glad of it and more disposed today to do it better and with greater facility and delight. I sometimes think that some people fail by not making a strenuous effort in this practice of making their resolution that half day only, and it would be a great help towards rendering their resolution more effectual.

In the chronicles of St. Francis it is related of Brother Juniper that, though he always spoke very little, yet one time he kept perpetual silence for six months together, in this way. The first day he purposed to keep silence in honor of God the Father; the second, in homage to God the Son; the third, in homage to the Holy Ghost; the fourth, for the love of our Lady; and so he ran through all the saints, each day observing silence with new fervor and devotion in honor of some one of them. Following this plan, a man is more encouraged to correct himself on that particular point on which he is making his particular examen and is also more ashamed and confounded for the faults that he commits, since even for so short a time he could not carry out his purpose. Thus in every way this method will be a great help to us.

CHAPTER VIII

That in the Examen We Should Insist and Dwell Principally on Sorrow and Purpose of Amendment

WHAT is to be particularly very much observed as regards the method of making the examen, is the matter of the three points which it contains. The two last are the most important; that is, grief and repentance for our faults and negligences and a firm purpose to correct them, according to that text of the prophet, *Have compunction in your beds* (Psalm iv. 5). In this sentiment of compunction and repentance and in this firm purpose not to fall again, all the force and efficacy of the examen as a means of self-amendment lies; and, therefore, on this most time should be spent. One of the chief reasons why many get little profit and amendment out of their examens is that they let the whole time slip away in searching out the times in which they have fallen into faults; and scarcely have they done with this point when examen time is over, and they do the rest superficially. They do not dwell on sorrow and repentance for their faults, nor on being ashamed and begging pardon for them, nor on making firm purposes of amendment for that afternoon or the day following, nor in begging God's grace and strength to that end. Hence it comes that, as many times as you have fallen today, so many you fall tomorrow, because the only thing you have done in the examen is to remember and call to mind the number of times that you have fallen. That is not the way to correct yourself; it is only the first point of the examen and the foundation on which the other principal points must be built. The effectual way to correct yourself is to grieve and repent in all sincerity for your faults, with a firm purpose of amending them, and to ask our Lord for grace to that end. You will never amend yourself if you do not that. These two things, grief for the past and pur-

pose of amendment for the future, are so akin to one another that the one goes on at the same rate as the other, for it is certain that, where we really abhor a thing, we take care not to plunge into it.

Every day we say and preach this to seculars; it is only reasonable that we should take it to ourselves. What is the reason, we say, why people in the world fall back again so easily into the same sins after so many confessions? Do you know what it is? The reason commonly is that they did not detest them in good earnest, nor did they come to confession with firm purposes never to sin again. Thus, since their heart was never fully determined to return wholly to God, but they only turned round half-face, as they say, they easily went back to what they had never entirely quitted; whereas, if they had been really sorry and detested their sin and had a firm purpose never to sin again, they would not have gone back to it at once so easily on leaving the confessional, just as if they had not confessed at all. For this reason also it is that you fall into the same faults in the afternoon as in the morning and the same today as yesterday, because you were not sorry for them in good earnest, nor detested them from your heart, nor had any firm purpose of amendment, nor dwelt upon this. Had you done so, you would not have relapsed into them so readily and so easily, since we are not wont so easily to do what we have once detested and what we are grieved and pained at having done. Sorrow and repentance for our sins, when it is real, not only rids us of past sins, but is a medicine preservative for the future; for he who steadily abhors sin is far from falling into it anew.

Even that heathen philosopher knew the efficacy and force of this means for not falling into sin, for, when a bad woman asked him an excessive price for sinning, he answered: "I do not buy repentance at so dear a rate." Let this answer be noted, for it is worthy not only of a philosopher, but of a Christian and a religious. Sometimes I set

myself to consider the folly of those who make up their minds to sin by saying: "I will repent afterwards and God will pardon me." But how can you be so foolish as to choose just now to gratify your appetite and gather a brief thrill of pleasure that passes in a moment, bargaining with it to keep up afterwards for life a perpetual sorrow and repentance for having allowed yourself that gratification? For, though it is true that God will pardon you that sin afterwards, if you repent of it, yet, after all, to obtain pardon, it is necessary to repent and be sorry afterwards for having done it. There is much force in this argument, even if we think only of earthly considerations—apart from the motive of the love of God, which should always be our principal motive—and look merely at our own satisfaction and self-love. I have no mind to do that which I know must give me afterwards much pain and much grief for having done it. The thrill of pleasure in doing it is over in a moment, while the grief and pain of having done it must last all my life, so that I can never afterwards take satisfaction or complacency therein. Great folly it is to choose so much pain at the price of so little pleasure.

St. Paul says the thing better: *What fruit did ye gather from that whereof ye are now ashamed?* (Rom. vi. 21). What show can that small satisfaction that you get make in comparison with the sorrow that you must feel afterwards? This should be considered beforehand before a fall. When the temptation comes, you should make this calculation and say: "I have no mind to do that of which I must afterwards be ashamed and repent as long as I live." Even here, when you want to persuade a man not to do a thing, you say to him: "See how you will repent afterwards of having done it." And he says: "No, I shall not repent;" for, if he thought that he would repent, he sees well what madness it would be to do what he knows must afterwards make him sorry and give him much pain.

I have said this that it may be seen what an efficacious means true sorrow and repentance is, to prevent our falling into our faults again; hence we may understand how important it is to dwell on this in our examens. It is true that one may have true sorrow and purpose of amendment and withal relapse again into sin, for we are not angels, but weak men, vessels of earth, which may break and fall to pieces and once more be made up again. Nevertheless, when a man, after finishing his confession, returns at once to the same oaths and to the same desires and sins that he has just confessed, we are wont commonly to say that he cannot have had true contrition or sorrow for that sin, nor any firm purpose of amendment, seeing that he relapses so quickly. In the same way it is a great indication and argument that you were not really sorry and had not any firm purpose of amendment when you made your examen at mid-day or at night on having broken silence, to see how that same afternoon or the very next day you break silence just in the same way as if you had not made any examen; and I say the same of other faults on which you are making examen. Even before your brethren you are ashamed to tell a fault or have it told you when you have told it already three or four times. How much more should you be ashamed before God, if you have really told your fault before Him, repenting of it from your heart and begging pardon and purposing amendment, not thrice or four times, but more than three or four dozen times! No doubt we should amend ourselves and make progress in quite another way if we repented and were sorry in good earnest and made firm purposes of amendment.

CHAPTER IX

That It Is a Very Helpful Thing to Add Some Penances to the Examen

OUR Father was not satisfied with sorrow and repentance and inward purposes, but we read in his Life that, for the better composing of the end desired, he recommended the addition of some penance to the particular examen, marking out for ourselves a certain penalty to exact of ourselves every time we fall into the fault which is the matter of our particular examen. Fra Louis of Granada gives instances of some servants of God whom he knew, one of whom, when he found at his night examen that he had exceeded in some ill-spoken word, would bite his tongue in penance for the same; and another would take a discipline for this and any other defect he fell into.

It is said of the holy Abbot Agatho that for three years he carried a pebble in his mouth to gain the virtue of silence. As we here wear a haircloth to mortify the flesh and to serve us as a caller to chastity, so this saint carried a pebble below his tongue that it might be, as it were, his haircloth and serve him as a reminder and caller not to speak more than necessary. And of our blessed Father Ignatius, we read that at the beginning of his conversion he was much tempted to laughter and that he overcame the temptation by free use of the discipline, giving himself as many strokes each night as there were times that he had laughed during the day, however slight the laugh had been. And it is usually a great help, this adding of some penance to the examen, for with the penance the soul feels chastened and afraid to commit that fault another time. The spur makes the beast go, however lazy it be. Such an aid is the spur that no sooner does the creature feel that there is one there, though it does not prick it, than it makes it go. If every time that a man broke silence he had to take a public discipline or dine on bread and water for three days,

which was the penance of old, marked in the Rules for those who broke silence, of a surety it would greatly restrain us from talking. Besides this, and the merit and satisfaction there is in it, there is another very great advantage, which is that God our Lord, seeing the penance wherewith a man chastises and afflicts himself, is wont to hear his petition and desire. And this is one of the effects of penance and exterior mortification that the saints set down, and our holy Father sets it down in the Book of the Exercises. The angel said to Daniel: *From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to afflict thyself in the sight of thy God, thy prayer was heard* (Dan. x. 12). The Prophet Daniel added to his prayer fasting and mortification of the flesh, and so obtained the deliverance of his people and moved God to reveal to him great mysteries and do him other very particular favors. And we see that in the Church of God this means has always been very commonly used to obtain and gain the favor of God in distresses and necessities.

When an infant asks of its mother the breast that it needs, and asks it only by expressing its desire by signs, the mother often refuses or puts it off; but when it asks by weeping and wailing, the mother cannot refrain from giving it at once. So when a man asks of God the virtue of humility, of patience, of chastity, or the victory over some temptation, or any like thing, and asks only by desire and word, oftentimes he does not gain what he asks, or is long put off; but when to prayer we join penance and mortification of the flesh and afflict ourselves before God, then we gain our petition much better, with greater certainty, and in shorter time. God has a great love of men and, seeing them putting themselves to pain and affliction to gain what they ask, He is moved to compassion and uses greater mercy with them. We read in Holy Writ that the patriarch Joseph could not contain himself when he saw the affliction and tears of his brethren, but discovered himself to them and made them partakers of all his goods: *Joseph could no*

longer contain himself, and said to his brethren, I am Joseph (Gen. xlv. 3). What will not He do, Who loves us more than Joseph and is our Brother, when He sees our affliction and grief? In every way this means will avail us much.

This agrees very well with what Cassian says, treating of the care and diligence with which we should proceed in the warfare and particular examen. If the struggle and particular examen ought to be, as we have said, on that point of which we have most need; if it ought to serve to uproot that passion or inclination which reigns more in us than others, which more particularly upsets us and puts us in greater dangers and makes us fall into most faults; if it be to overcome that vice, the overcoming of which will carry victory over all the rest, and the gaining of that virtue with which we shall have gained all other virtues, with how much solicitude and diligence will it be reasonable for us to act in a matter of so much importance to us! Do you know with how much? Cassian tells us: "Against this predominant passion let him employ his man's force, devoting all his care and solicitude to attacking and watching it; against it let him direct the daily arrows of his fasts; against it let him heave every moment the sighs of his heart and hurl the darts of his groans; against it be the labors of his watchings and the meditation of his heart; against it let him ceaselessly pour out before God the wailings of his prayers, begging Him especially and continually to put an end to the assaults of that vice."

We must not rest content with taking this care about our examen alone, but also about our meditation; and that not only in the time set aside for meditation, but frequently in the day we must raise our heart to God with ejaculatory prayers and sighs and groans of the heart: "Lord, humility; Lord, chastity; Lord, patience." For this we should often visit the Blessed Sacrament, asking with much earnestness of the Lord to give us grace to gain a thing so important

to us; we must have recourse to our Lady and the saints to be our intercessors. To this end we must direct our fasts, haircloths, disciplines, and subjoin certain devotions and offer certain particular mortifications. If in this manner and with this care and diligence we went to work with our particular examen, we should quickly feel the better for it because the Lord would see our affliction and hear our prayer and fulfil the desire of our heart. And all this must be well observed to aid us also therewith in other temptations and grave needs that occur. St. Bonaventure says that our Lady told St. Elizabeth of Hungary that no spiritual grace comes to the soul, regularly speaking, otherwise than by prayer and afflictions of the body.

CHAPTER X

Of the General Examination of Conscience

THE general examination of conscience contains five points. The first is to give thanks to God for benefits received. This calling to mind of benefits received is put first in order that, contrasting therewith the faults and sins that we have committed in return for so many benefits, we may thence take occasion better to enter into sentiments of confusion and heartfelt sorrow. Thus, the Prophet Nathan first recounted to David the favors that God had done him in order to show the deformity and magnitude of the sin that he had committed. The second point is to ask of our Lord grace to know the faults and sins into which we have fallen. The third, to take account of our soul, going through our conduct from the hour at which we made our resolutions, first for thoughts, secondly for words, thirdly for actions. The fourth point is to beg God's pardon for the faults that we find we have committed, grieving and repenting for the same. The fifth, to purpose amendment by the grace of the Lord, with an Our Father.

This general examen should be made always along with the particular; for immediately in the morning on rising we should offer to our Lord all that we are going to do that day. So our Father says, speaking of the particular examen, that immediately on rising we should purpose to be on our guard against that particular vice which we wish to correct; and this is the first time for the particular examen. We should also at the same time offer to God all the thoughts, words, and actions of that day, that all may be for His glory, purposing at the same time not to offend Him and begging His grace to that end. It is reasonable that all should have the custom of doing this. Afterwards, twice a day, at midday and at night, we must make the general examen along with the particular. Such is the custom of the Society founded on our Constitutions, and we find it expressed in the first of the Common Rules: "Let all twice a day give the time marked out to them for the examination of their conscience." Thus, as the clock is regulated and the weights wound up twice a day, at morning and at night, that it may keep time, so we ought to regulate the clock of our conscience by the morning and night examen that it may always keep time. Thus at noon, when we go through and take account of the times that we have failed in the matter of our particular examen, from the hour at which we made the purpose, which was when we rose, down to then, so also we must run through and take account of the faults we have committed in thought, word, and deed from the time that we rose till then; and after that we must move ourselves to shame and repentance for the faults committed in the matter of our particular and general examen together, and purpose amendment for the afternoon as well in the one as in the other. And at night we must make in like manner the particular and the general examen together, going through and taking account only of the time since our previous examen at midday.

The main thing to notice about the manner of making this general examen is the same as we said of the particular, that all its force and efficacy lies in these two latter points, that is, in repentance and shame for the faults we have fallen into and a firm purpose of amendment for the afternoon or for tomorrow morning; in that consists our making our examen well and drawing fruit from it. Father Master Avila says of this examen: "You should make account that you have entrusted to you a prince's son to take continual care of, to see after him and set him in the way of good habits and clear him of bad ones, and that every day you call him to account." Now if you had such a charge, it is clear that you would not lay the main stress of his amendment on his telling you how many times he has fallen and failed today, but in making him acknowledge his fault, in rebuking him and giving him admonitions and drawing from him purposes of amendment; and you would tell him plainly, in so many words, that being the son of him whose son he is, he must mend his ways. So, then, in this manner you ought to regard your soul as a thing entrusted to you by God and in this manner you ought to deal with it in the account that you ask of it. And on this you ought to lay the stress of your examen and self-amendment—not on calling to mind the faults that you have committed, but on shame and repentance for having committed them and on rebuking yourself as you would rebuke another person of whom you had the charge, and on making firm resolutions not to fall again into these faults.

And we ought to be aided hereto by the consideration that the general examen is the proper and legitimate preparation for confession; and this is the title that our Father gives it in the Book of Spiritual Exercises: "A general examination of conscience for a man to cleanse his soul and better prepare for confession." And the reason is manifest. For two principal things are required for confession; the first is examination of one's faults, the second is sorrow for them. These things are done completely in

the examen of conscience and so, if we make this examen well, we shall make our confession well. And it is to be observed that the sorrow necessary for confession, as the Council of Trent and that of Florence says, includes two things: regret and repentance for sin, and purpose not to sin any more. Where either of these two things is wanting, there will be no sufficient disposition for confession. Some think that then only is their confession null and void, when they leave out some sin through shame; but I believe that there are many more cases of confessions' being bad, sacrilegious, and null, for want of true sorrow and purpose of amendment than for want of due acknowledgment of sins.

Hereby may be seen how necessary this preparation is and how important it is to accustom ourselves in our examen to excite ourselves, and take time over exciting ourselves, to sorrow for our faults and purpose never to fall into them again. And so I say that of the three principal points that there are in the examen—the other two being what we may call preludes—the chief part of the time should be spent on the two last, that is, on begging God's pardon and moving ourselves to repentance and shame for our faults, and on making purposes of amendment. The lesser portion of the time should be spent in running through and calling to mind the faults into which we have fallen. For this latter point, albeit it is one of those three principal points, the third part of the examen time is sufficient. The other two parts should be kept for the other two points, since they are the principal points and on them the force and efficacy and fruit of the examen depends.

But someone will say: "How shall we be able in such a short time as the third part of a quarter of an hour to go through all the times that we have fallen in the matter of the particular examen, besides the faults that we have committed in that of the general examen by thought, word, and deed? Why, even the whole quarter of an hour would seem

too little for this." The best means for this is to bring the first point already done when we go to examen. It is told of our blessed Father Ignatius that every time he failed in the matter of his particular examen he tied a knot on a shoe-string that he carried on his girdle for this express purpose, and afterwards by the knots he knew the number of times without stopping any more on it. And as for what regarded the general examen, he did not let an hour of the day pass without recollecting himself, leaving all else alone to examine his conscience. And if perchance some business came in upon him, so grave and so urgent an occupation as not to allow him that hour to fulfil his devotional practice, he made it up the next hour or as soon as the occupation gave him a vacant moment.

This would be a very good devotion, every time the clock struck to cast a glance at our conscience. Some even have the practice of examining themselves over every action they do. And if it seems much to you to do this every hour or over every action, it will be good to do it at least over every one of the principal actions of the day; and of some we have special directions that on finishing them we should make examen of them, as we have said above. St. Bonaventure says that a servant of God should examine himself seven times a day. And if in the particular examen we keep that addition of putting our hand to our breast every time we fall, we shall easily remember thereby the number of times that we have fallen. Although our Father does not appoint this addition to enable us to remember our faults, but to make us repent of them at once, and therefore he prescribes this gesture of putting the hand to the breast, as though to say, "I have sinned"; yet, after all, if we keep this addition, it will be a great help to us afterwards to remember easily the times we have fallen. Add to this that, when one keeps a reckoning with oneself and lives with a careful eye to making progress, whenever one falls into a fault such a person at once feels remorse of conscience, which is the best awakener to make him remember it.

This is the final answer to two sorts of persons. For some there are to whom a whole quarter of an hour seems little time enough to remember the faults into which they have fallen, and to these we have already given a method how to bring the first point as it were already done, that so they may have time over to busy themselves with the two following. Others there are on the contrary whom the quarter of an hour of examen leaves much at large, and they do not find anything to spend it on; these we may more easily satisfy. We have already said that alike at midday and at night the general examen must be made along with the particular, and after having seen the faults into which we have fallen in the one examen and in the other, we should occupy ourselves in sentiments of shame and repentance for them and in begging pardon and in firm purposes of amendment and in asking of our Lord grace thereto; on which occupation the more we dwell, the better.

St. Dorotheus adds to this a piece of advice very helpful. He says that at examen we should not only take account of the faults into which we have fallen, but much more of the roots of those faults, examining the causes and occasions that led to our fall, that so we may be forewarned and on our guard against them from this time onwards. Thus, if by going out of my room I have broken silence or murmured, I must resolve not to go out of it henceforth without necessity, and then to go forewarned, and so of others the like things. Otherwise, it will be like a man stumbling over a stone and, for not paying attention to the occasion of his stumbling, stumbling there the next morning also; or as a man wanting to set a blighted tree right by merely cutting off some branches and the rotten and worm-eaten fruit. If we make our examens in this way, the time prescribed for them will not seem too ample, but short.

CHAPTER XI

That the Examen of Conscience Is a Means of Putting into Execution All Other Spiritual Methods and Directions, and the Reason Why We Do Not Profit by It Is That We Do Not Make It As We Ought

THE blessed St. Basil, after having given his monks many spiritual directions, concludes with this, that every night before going to bed they should make examen of conscience, thinking that this will be sufficient to secure the observance of all that he has said and hold them to it. With this also I wish to conclude this treatise, much commending this examination to all, since by the grace of the Lord it will be enough to put all other spiritual directions into execution and remedy all our faults. If you are growing slack at prayer, careless of obedience, uncontrolled in talking, beginning to take back a little of your free and easy worldly ways, all that will be stopped and cured at once by this examen. He who makes this examination of conscience every day may reckon that he carries with him a governor, a master of novices, a superior, who every day and every hour will ask of him an account, advise him what to do, and rebuke him on any point on which he fails.

Father Master Avila says: "Your faults cannot go on long if this examination of conscience goes on," and this squaring of your accounts and rebuking yourself every day and every hour. And if your faults do go on, and at the end of many days, and perhaps years, you are as unmortified, your passions as full and lively as at the beginning, it is because you do not use as you ought these means that we have for our spiritual progress. For if you had really taken to heart the getting rid of one fault and the gaining of one virtue and had gone about it with care and diligence, purposing amendment three times a day at least, morning, midday, and night, comparing every day the faults of the

evening with those of the morning, and the faults of today with those of yesterday, and those of this week with those of the week past, repenting and being ashamed so many times for having fallen and begging support of our Lord and of His saints to correct yourself—at the end of so much time you would have come out with some result.

But if a man goes on making his examen out of routine and for form's sake, without any true sorrow for his faults and any firm purposes of amendment, that is no examen, but a vain ceremony and a Christmas game. Hence it is that the same evil propensities and the same bad habits and inclinations that a man brought from the world, he keeps after many years of religion. If he was proud, proud he is today; if he was impatient and haughty, the same he is today; if he used to utter sharp and stinging words, he utters them today: he is as unmannerly today as he was the first day, as self-willed, as greedy, as great a lover of his own comforts. And God grant that, instead of advancing and growing in virtue, they have not grown in ill-nature and in free and easy ways as they became seniors in religion; and that, while they ought to be more humble, they are not more uppish and presumptuous and fall not into that false position of which St. Bernard speaks: "Many there are who there in the world would have been held in small account, and here in religion want to be great people; and who there would not have found necessities, but here seek comforts"—*Quodque perversum est, plerique in domo Dei non patiuntur haberi contemptui, qui in sua non-nisi contemptibiles esse potuerunt.*

From what has been said it will appear also what a bad excuse it is that some make for their faults, saying: "Oh, that is my way." Rather he is all the more to blame who, knowing that he has this or that bad way and being bound to bestow all his care and diligence in fortifying that weak side of his character, not to come to ruin thereby, lets himself be at the end of so long a time as passionate and unre-

strained as he was the first day he came. Let him, then, who makes it his business to serve God—for to all such persons we are speaking here—enter into himself and begin anew, trying henceforth to get his examination of conscience well done, so that the fruit thereof may appear. We are ^{human} men, and we have our faults and shall have them so long as we are in this life; but we should try to realize three things by aid of the examen. In the first place, if our faults were many, let them henceforth be few; secondly, if they were great, let them be smaller; thirdly, let them not always be the same, for to repeat the same fault time after time argues great carelessness and negligence.

Evagruis, in a book which he wrote on the life and bodily exercises of monks, mentions one holy monk who said: "I do not know that the devils have ever caught me twice in the same fault." This man must have made his examen of conscience well; this man repented in earnest and made firm purposes of amendment. In this way, then, we should make our examens. By this means God raised and elevated our blessed Father Ignatius to such perfection. We read in his Life a notable and very special thing. Comparing yesterday with today and his present state of progress with his past, he found that every day he had advanced and gained ground, or, rather, had gained not earthly ground but heaven. So much so that in his old age he came to say that the state in which he was at Manresa—which in the time of his studies he used to call his "primitive Church"—had been like a noviceship; and daily God went on adorning his soul and filling in with odors of perfection the portrait of which at Manresa He had sketched only the outlines. Let us, then, use as we ought the means which the Lord has so specially given us, and let us have great confidence that thereby He will raise us to the perfection which we desire.

EIGHTH TREATISE

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD



CHAPTER I

In Which Two Fundamental Principles Are Laid Down

NOT as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. xxvi. 39). For two ends, the saints tell us, the Son of God descended from heaven and clothed Himself with our flesh, making Himself true man. The one end was to redeem us by His precious blood, the other to teach us by His doctrine the way to heaven and instruct us by His example. For, as it would profit us nothing to know the way if we remained shut up in the prison, so, says St. Bernard, it would not profit us to deliver us from prison if we did not know the way. And as God was invisible, that we might see Him and be able to follow and imitate Him, it was necessary that He should make Himself man and clothe Himself in our human nature, as the shepherd clothes himself with the shepherd's smock frock, which is the skin of a sheep, that the sheep may follow him, seeing their own likeness. St. Leo says: "If He were not true God, He would bring us no remedy; if He were not true man, He would give us no example." He did the one and the other in all completeness for the excess of love that He bore to men. As His *redemption was copious* (Psalm cxxix. 7), so also was His teaching; for it was not only given by words, but much more abundantly by the example of His deeds. *Jesus began to do and to teach* (Acts i. 1). He first began *to do*, and that all His life long, and afterwards *to preach* for the last three years of His life, or two and a half.

Now, among the things that Christ our Redeemer taught us, one of the chiefest was that we should have an entire conformity with the will of God in all things. He taught us that, not only in words—instructing us how to pray, He

set down for one of our principal petitions, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven* (Matt. vi. 10)—but He also confirmed this doctrine by His example: *I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me* (John vi. 38). And at the time of accomplishing the work of our redemption, that Thursday of the Supper, in that prayer in the Garden, though His body and sensible appetite naturally shrank from death—and so to show that He was true man He said: *Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me* (Matt. xxvi. 42)—yet His will ever remained quite ready and desirous to drink the chalice which His Father was sending Him, and therefore He added at once: *Yet not my will, but thine be done.*

To go to the root of the matter and establish ourselves well in this conformity, we must suppose two brief but very substantial fundamental principles on which all this matter must turn as upon two hinges. The first is that our advancement and perfection consist in conformity to the will of God; and the greater and more perfect this conformity, the greater will be our perfection. This foundation lends itself to being readily understood, for it is certain that perfection consists essentially in charity and love of God, and a man will be more perfect the more he loves God. Full of this doctrine is the holy Gospel, full the epistles of St. Paul, full the writings of the saints. *This is the greatest and first commandment* (Matt. xxii. 38). *Charity is the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14). *The greatest of these virtues is charity* (I Cor. xiii. 13). The highest and most perfect is charity and the love of God. But the highest and most exalted and purest point of this love, and what we may call the acme of it, is conformity in all to the will of God, so as to have one will of acceptance and one will of refusal with His Divine Majesty in all things. St. Jerome says, and he has it from a pagan philosopher: “To have the same *I will* and *I will not* with him whom you love; that is true friendship”—*Eadem velle et eadem nolle, ea demum*

firma amicitia est. It follows that, the more conformable and the more united to the will of God a man is, the better will he be. Further, it is clear that there is nothing better or more perfect than the will of God. Therefore, the more a man seeks and conforms himself to the will of God, the better and more perfect will he be. So that other philosopher argued: "If God is the most perfect being there is, the more perfect any other being will be, the more it is assimilated and made like to God."

The second fundamental principle is this, that nothing can happen or come about in this world but by the will and ordinance of God—always understanding, *except fault and sin*, for of that God is not cause nor author, nor can He be; for as it is repugnant to the nature of fire to freeze and to that of water to warm and to that of the sun to darken, so it is infinitely more against the goodness of God to love evil. So said the Prophet Habacuc: *Lord, thine eyes are too pure to bear the sight of evil, and thou canst not give countenance to iniquity* (Hab. i. 13). As we say here on earth, "He cannot bear the sight," to give to understand the abhorrence that one has for a thing, so he says that God cannot bear the sight of evil for the great hatred and abhorrence that He has for it. *Thou art not a God that willest iniquity* (Psalm v. 5). *Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity* (Psalm xliv. 8). All Holy Writ is full of the abhorrence that God has for sin, and so He cannot be cause or author of it. But apart from this, all other things and all penal evils and afflictions come of the will and ordinance of God. This foundation, also, is quite sure. There is no such thing as fortune in the world; that was a fiction and error of the heathen. The goods that the world calls goods of fortune are not given by fortune—there is no such thing—but by God alone. So says the Holy Spirit by the Wise Man: *Good things and evil things, life and death, poverty and riches, God gives them all* (Ecclus. xi. 14).

And though these things come by means of secondary causes, still it is certain that nothing is done in this great

commonwealth of the world but by the will and ordinance of that sovereign Emperor Who governs it. Nothing comes by chance in respect of God; all is registered and sorted out by His hand. He counts all the bones of your body and all the hairs of your head; not one of them shall fall but by His ordinance and will. Why do I speak of men? Not a sparrow falls into the net, says Christ our Redeemer, but by the dispensation and will of God. *Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall to the ground without the providence of your Father* (Matt. x. 29). There is not a leaf that stirs on a tree but by His will. So the Wise Man says of lots: *Lots are thrown into the urn, but God it is that directs them* (Prov. xvi. 33). Although the lots are drawn from the caddy or urn, think not that they come out by chance; they come out only by the ordinance of divine providence, which disposes and wills it so. *The lot fell upon Matthias* (Acts i. 26). It was not by chance that the lot fell on Matthias, but by a particular case and providence of God Who was pleased to choose him for His apostle by that way.

Good philosophers attained to this truth even by the sole light of nature and said that, although in respect of natural causes many things happen by chance, yet in respect of the First Cause they are not by chance, but intended quite on purpose. They give this example. A master sends a servant in some direction on business and sends another servant by a different way to the same place on other business, without the knowledge of either of them, but meaning them to meet there. The meeting of the servants is by chance in respect of themselves, but in respect of their master, who intended it, it is not by chance, but thought out and intended of set purpose. So here, though in respect of men some things fall out by chance because they neither intended nor thought of them; yet in respect of God it is not by chance, but by His knowledge and will, He having so ordained it for secret and hidden ends known to Himself.

What we have to draw from these two fundamental principles is the conclusion and thesis which we proposed—that since all that befalls us comes from the hand of God and all our perfection lies in conforming ourselves to His will, we should take all things as coming from His hand and conform ourselves therein to His most holy and divine will. You must not take anything as coming by chance or by the industry and contrivance of men, for that is what generally gives so much pain and annoyance. You must not think that this or that came upon you because So-and-So managed it, and if it had not been for this or that thing, things would have gone otherwise. You must make no account of that, but take all things as coming from the hand of God, by whatsoever way or whatsoever roundabout process they come, since it is He Who sends them by those means. One of those famous Fathers of the Desert used to say that a man could not find true repose or satisfaction in this life unless he reckoned that there is only God and himself in the world. And St. Dorotheus says that those ancient Fathers made a great point of taking all things as coming from the hand of God, however small they were and in whatever manner they came about, and thereby kept themselves in great peace and quiet and lived a heavenly life.

CHAPTER II

Further Explanation of the Second Fundamental Principle

IT is a truth so settled in Holy Writ that all afflictions and penal evils come from the hand of God, that it would not be necessary for us to take time in proving it, were it not for the obscurity which the devil with his cunning tries to throw over it. From the other also certain truth which we stated, which is that God is not cause or author of sin, the devil draws a false and lying conclusion, making some people believe that, though the evils that come to us by

means of natural causes and irrational creatures, as sickness, hunger, and barrenness, come from the hand of God, because there is no sin nor can be in such creatures, since they are not capable of it; yet the evil and affliction which come about by the fault of a man who wounds me, robs me, dishonors me, does not come from the hand of God nor is guided by the ordinance of His providence, but by the malice and damnable will of another man. This is a very great error. St. Dorotheus says very well, rebuking this error in those who do not take these things as coming from the hand of God: "There are those who, when another person says a word against them or does them any other ill turn, forget God and turn all their rage against their neighbor, imitating dogs who bite the stone and neither look at nor take account of the hand that threw it."

To banish this erroneous action and secure a firm foundation in Catholic truth, theologians observe that two elements there are combined in a sin that man commits; the one is the movement and exterior act, the other, the disorder of the will wandering away from what God commands. God is author of the former; man, of the latter. Let us take the case of a man quarreling with another and killing him. To kill him he must needs put his hand to his sword, draw it and brandish his arm, and deal the blow, and do other natural movements which may be considered by themselves apart from the disorder of the will of the man who does them to kill another. Of all these movements, considered by themselves, God is cause and He produces them as He produces likewise the effects of the action of irrational creatures. For, as these creatures cannot stir nor act without God, so neither can man. He cannot stir his arm nor put his hand to his sword. Besides that, these natural acts are not evil of themselves, for, if a man practises them in necessary self-defense or in a just war or as a minister of justice, and so kills another, he would not sin. But of the fault, which is the defect and disorder of the will,

whereby the wicked man does the injury, of that deviation from reason and perversion of the same, God is not cause, although He permits it where He might hinder it; but hinder it He does not, in fulfilment of just judgments of His own. They illustrate this by a comparison. A man has a wound on his foot and goes limping. The cause of his foot's going is the virtue and motive power of his soul; but of his limping, the cause is the wound and not the virtues of the soul. So of the sinful action that man does, the cause of the action is God, but the cause of the fault and sin that there is in the act is the free will of man. Thus, though God is not nor can be cause or author of sin, yet we must hold for certain that all penal evils come from the hand of God and by dispensation of His providence, by whatever way and in whatever manner they come, whether they come by means of natural causes and irrational creatures or by means of rational creatures. God guided the hand of him that hurt you and the tongue of him who gave you the opprobrious name. *Shall there be evil in the city that the Lord hath not done?* says the Prophet Amos (iii. 6). Holy Writ is full of this truth, attributing to God the evil that one man does to another and saying that it is God Who did it.

In the Second Book of Kings, in the account of the chastisement wherewith God chastised David by means of his son Absalom for the sin of adultery and murder that he had committed, God says that it was Himself that was to do it. *So I will raise up over against thee evil from thine own house* (II Kings xii. 11). Hence it is also that the impious kings, who in their pride and cruelty inflicted most atrocious chastisements on the people of God, are called by Scripture instruments of the divine justice. *Ah, for Assur, the rod of my indignation!* (Isaias x. 5). And of Cyrus, King of the Persians, by whom the Lord intended to chastise the Chaldeans, He says: *Whose right hand I have grasped* (Isaias xlv. 1). On which St. Augustine has this

excellent remark: "God deals with us as an earthly father is wont to do. When the father is angry with his son, he takes a stick which he finds hard by and chastises his son with it. Then the stick he casts into the fire, and keeps for the son the inheritance. In this way God is wont to take wicked men for an instrument and scourge to chastise the good." We read in ecclesiastical history how, at the destruction of Jerusalem, Titus, general of the Romans, going round the city, saw the ditches (moats) full of corpses and dead bodies and all the neighborhood infected by the stench. Whereupon he raised his eyes to heaven and with a loud voice called God to witness that it was none of his doing that so great slaughter had taken place. And when that barbarian Celaric was going to sack and destroy Rome, a venerable monk met him and begged him not to be the cause of so many evil deeds as were likely to be committed on that expedition. And he replied: "I am not going to Rome of my own accord, but some person assails me every day and torments me, saying: 'Go to Rome and destroy the city.'" Thus all things come from the hand of God and by His ordinance and will. So the Royal Prophet David, when Semei reviled him and flung stones and dirt at him, said to those who would have had him take vengeance on the fellow: *The Lord hath commanded him to curse David; and who shall dare to say, Why has thou commanded it?* (II Kings xvi. 10). He means to say: "The Lord hath taken him for the instrument of my affliction and punishment."

But what great thing is it to recognize men as instruments of the divine justice and providence, since the same is true even of the devils themselves, obstinate and hardened as they are in their malice and anxious for our perdition? St. Gregory observes this marvelously in that saying of Scripture: *An evil spirit of the Lord tormented Saul* (I Kings xvi. 23). The same spirit is called "spirit of the Lord" and "evil spirit"—"evil" by desire of his evil will;

and "of the Lord" to give us to understand that he was sent by God to give that torment to Saul, and God worked by him. And this the text itself there declares, saying: *An evil spirit, sent by the Lord, tormented him (Spiritus nequam a Domino)* (I Kings xvi. 14). And for the same reason, says the saint, the devils, who afflict and persecute the just, are called in Scripture "God's robbers": "robbers" for the evil will that they have to do us harm; and yet "of God" to give us to understand that the power they have to do us harm they have from God. So St. Augustine makes this excellent reflection: "Job did not say 'The Lord hath given, and the devil has taken away,' but he referred all to God: *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away* (Job i. 21); for he knew well that the devil could do no evil but what God permitted him to do." And the saint goes on to say: "Let no one say, 'The devil has done me this ill turn;' but attribute your affliction and scourge to God, since the devil could do nothing against you nor touch even a hair of your head unless God gave him permission thereto." Thus the devils could not enter into the swine of the Gerasenes, without first asking permission of Christ our Redeemer (Matt. viii. 31). How could they touch you, how could they tempt you, without God's leave? He who could not touch the swine, how shall he touch the children?

CHAPTER III

Of the Great Benefits and Advantages Contained in This Conformity to the Will of God

THE blessed St. Basil says that the height of sanctity and perfection in Christian life consists in attributing the causes of all things, great and small, to God and conforming ourselves therein to His most holy will. But that we may better understand the perfection and importance of this and so be more given to it and more careful to secure it, we will proceed to set forth in particular the benefits

and great advantages contained in this conformity to the will of God.

In the first place, this is that true and perfect resignation which the saints and all the masters of spiritual life so greatly extol, and say that it is the root and principle of all our peace and quiet, since in this way a man submits and places himself in the hands of God, like a little clay in the hands of a workman, that He may work in him His entire will, not seeking any longer to be his own, or to live for himself, nor to eat, nor sleep, nor labor for himself, but all for God and for the sake of God. Now this is what this conformity effects, since by it a man entrusts himself entirely to the will of God, so as not to desire to seek anything else than that the divine will may be entirely accomplished in him alike in all that the man himself does and in all that may happen to him, alike in prosperity and consolation and in adversity and affliction. This is so pleasing to God that for it King David was called by God a man according to His own heart. *I have found David, a man according to my own heart, who will accomplish all my wishes* (I Kings xiii. 14). He kept his heart in as much abandonment and subjection to the heart of the Lord, and as prompt and ready for anything that God might please to imprint thereon in the way of affliction or relief, as a piece of soft wax to receive any figure or form that men chose to give it. Therefore he said again and again: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* (Psalm lvi. 8; cvii. 2).

Secondly, he who shall have attained this entire and perfect conformity to the will of God, will have gained an entire and perfect mortification and mastery of all his passions and evil inclinations. We well know how necessary this mortification is and how highly it is praised and commended by saints and Holy Scripture. Now this mortification is a means necessarily to be presupposed to come to attain to this conformity to the will of God. That is the end, and mortification the means to arrive at that end. Now

the ultimate end must always be higher and more perfect than the means. How necessary a means mortification is to come to attain to this entire and perfect conformity to the will of God is easy to see, for what hinders this union and conformity is our own self-will and disorderly appetite. Thus the more a man denies and mortifies his will and appetite, the more easily will he unite and conform himself to the will of God. To unite and adjust a rough piece of wood to another well wrought and polished, it is necessary first to tool it and remove the roughness, otherwise the one will never fit into the other. Now this is what mortification does; it removes our roughness, planing and tooling us, that so we may be able to be united and adjusted to God, conforming ourselves in all to His divine will. Thus the more mortified a man is, the better will he succeed in uniting and adjusting himself to the will of God; and when he shall be perfectly mortified, then will he arrive at this perfect union and conformity.

Hence follows another thing, which may be our number three. This entire resignation and conformity to the will of God is the greatest and most acceptable and agreeable sacrifice that a man can offer of himself to God. In other sacrifices he offers his goods, but in this he offers himself. In other sacrifices and mortifications he mortifies himself in part—as in temperance or modesty, in silence or in patience, he offers a part of himself to God; but this is a holocaust in which a man offers himself entirely and wholly to God to do with all that He wills and as He wills and when He wills, without exception of anything or reservation of anything for himself. Thus, as man is worth more than the property of man and the whole is worth more than the part, so this sacrifice is worth more than all other sacrifices and mortifications. And God sets such store by it that it is this that He requires and asks of us. *Son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). Thus as the royal hawk feeds only on hearts, so does God feed on that which is most precious and

valuable, which is the heart. If you give Him not this, with nothing else can you content or satisfy Him. And this is not asking much of us; for if to us, who are a little heap of dust and ashes, all that God has created is not enough to satisfy or content us, and our tiny little heart will never be satisfied with anything less than God, how can you think to content and satisfy God by giving Him not your whole heart, but part of it, and reserving the rest for yourself? You are much mistaken, since our heart does not admit of being divided or parted in this manner. A little and narrow bed is the heart, says the Prophet Isaias (xxviii. 20); there is no room in it for more than God. Therefore the spouse calls it a *little bed* (Cant. iii. 1), because she kept her heart narrowed in such a way as to leave no room for any other than her Beloved. And whoever shall seek to dilate and widen his heart to make room in it for another, will cast God out of it, and of this His Divine Majesty complains by Isaias (lvii. 8): *Thou hast committed adultery, receiving in the bed of thy heart another than thy Beloved, and to cover the adulterer thou hast uncovered and cast out God.* Had we a thousand hearts, we should offer them all to God, and all should seem to us little compared to what we owe to so great a Lord.

Fourthly, as we said at the beginning, whoever shall reach this conformity, will reach perfect charity and love of God; and the more he shall grow in it, the more will he grow in love of God and consequently in perfection, which consists in this charity and love. This faith, apart from what we said before, is well gathered from what we have said just now, since the love of God consists not in words, but in deeds. "The proof of love is the display of work done," says St. Gregory. And the more difficult the works are and the more they cost us, the more manifest is the love that prompts them. So St. John, to show the love that God bore the world, says: *God hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son to suffer and die for us* (John

iii. 16). And to manifest the love that He bore His Father, Christ our Redeemer says: *That the world may know that I love the Father, arise, let us go hence* (John xiv. 31); and the errand on which He went was to suffer death on the Cross. So He gave testimony to the world that He loved His Father, in accomplishing a commandment so rigorous. Thus it is in works that love is shown; and the greater and more laborious the works are, the greater is the display of love. This entire conformity to the will of God, as we have said, is the greatest sacrifice that we can offer of ourselves to God because it presupposes a perfect mortification and resignation, whereby one offers oneself to God and places oneself entirely in His hands, that He may do therewith what He pleases. And so there is nothing in which a man better shows the love that he bears to God than in this, since he gives and offers Him all that he has and all that he possibly could have and desire; and if he could have more and could give more, he would give it all.

CHAPTER IV

That This Perfect Conformity to the Will of God Is Happiness and Bliss on Earth

HE who shall attain to this entire conformity to the will of God, taking all that happens as coming from His hand and conforming himself therein to His most holy and divine will, will have gained happiness and bliss here on earth, will enjoy very great peace and tranquillity, will ever have perpetual joy and gladness in his soul, which is the happiness and bliss of the blessed enjoyed here by the great servants of God: *The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost* (Rom. xiv. 17). This is the kingdom of God on earth and the paradise of delights which we are able to enjoy here. And rightly is it called bliss, because it makes us in some sort like to the blessed. For as there in heaven there

are no changes nor fluctuations, but the blessed ever remain in one frame of mind, rejoicing in God, so here on earth those who have attained to such entire and perfect conformity that all their satisfaction is the satisfaction and will of God, are not disturbed or troubled by the changes of this life or by the various ways in which things turn out. Their will and heart are so united and conformed to the divine will that their seeing that all comes from His hand and that the will and satisfaction of God is accomplished therein, changes afflictions into joys and discomforts into mirth, since they seek and will rather the will of their Beloved than their own. Thus there is nothing that can disturb such people: if anything could disturb them and give them pain, it would be afflictions, adversities, and contumelies; but such things they take for a special delight and consolation, since they come from the hand of God and such is His will. Thus there is nothing left that can possibly disturb or banish the peace and restfulness of their soul.

This is the cause of that unbroken peace and cheerfulness in which we read that those saints of old always lived—a St. Anthony, a St. Dominic, a St. Francis, and others like them. The same we read of our blessed Father Ignatius and we see it ordinarily in the great servants of God. Do you think those saints had not their troubles? Had they no temptations or infirmities such as we have? Did they not pass through various and diversified changes of fortune? Certainly they did, and through much more trying circumstances than we encounter, since it is the greatest saints that God usually exercises and tries with such things. How, then, did they keep ever in the same frame of mind, with the same countenance and deportment, with an interior and exterior serenity and cheerfulness as if it were always Easter with them? The cause thereof was what we are saying, that they had come to attain to an entire conformity to the will of God and placed all their joy in the accomplishment thereof; thus everything turned out to

their satisfaction. *To them that love God all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). *The just shall not be saddened by anything that happens to him* (Prov. xii. 21). Labor, temptation, mortification, all was converted for them into joy because they understood that such was the will of God, in which all their satisfaction lay. They had gained already that happiness and bliss which can be tasted in this life and so they walked as if in glory. St. Catherine of Siena says very well on this point that the just are like Christ our Redeemer, Who never lost the blessedness of His soul for all His many griefs and pains. There the just never lose that blessedness which consists in conformity to the will of God, for all their many afflictions. There ever lasts and remains in them that joy and satisfaction, which consists in the will and good pleasure of God being accomplished in them.

This is a peace so exalted and so extraordinary that St. Paul says of it: *The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and intelligences in Christ Jesus* (Phil. iv. 7). He says that this peace surpasses all understanding, because it is so high and supernatural a gift that human understanding cannot of itself comprehend how it is possible for a heart of flesh to be quiet, peaceful, and full of consolation in the midst of the whirlwinds and storms of temptation and affliction there are in this life. This appears in the marvel of the bush that burned and was not consumed, and in the miracle of the three youths in the Babylonian furnace, who in the midst of the fire remained whole and entire, praising God. This it is that holy Job said, speaking to God: *Lord, thou tormentest me marvelously* (Job x. 16), giving us to understand on the one hand the great affliction and pain that he was suffering and on the other hand the great content and satisfaction that he had in suffering, since such was the will and good pleasure of God.

Cassian relates that an old man of Alexandria, being surrounded by a great multitude of unbelievers uttering curses against him, stood in the midst of them like a lamb, suffering in silence with great peacefulness of heart. They mocked him, gave him buffets and blows, and did him other grievous injuries. Among other things, they said to him with scorn: "What miracles has Jesus Christ wrought?" He answered: "The miracles that He has wrought are that, suffering the injuries that you are doing me, even if they were greater, still I feel no indignation nor anger against you nor any trouble of passion." This is a great marvel and a very high and extraordinary perfection.

Of that mountain of Macedonia called Olympus the ancients say, and St. Augustine refers to it in many places, that it is so high that there is no experience up there of winds or rains or clouds. Even birds cannot harbor there, since it is so high as to rise above the first region of the air and reach to the second; and so the air there is so pure and refined that clouds cannot form and float in it, as they require a more dense atmosphere. And for the same reason birds cannot hold on their way there nor can men live there either, the air being too subtle and refined for respiration. Information of this was given by certain climbers who went up there year after year to offer certain sacrifices. They carried with them moist sponges to put to their nostrils, and so condense the air as to make it breathable. These people wrote up there in the dust certain alphabetic characters, which they found next year as clean-cut and entire as they had left them, which could not be if there were winds and rains. Now this is the state of perfection to which they have mounted up and attained, who have this entire conformity to the will of God. They have mounted and risen so high, they have gained by this time such a perfect peace, that there are no clouds nor winds nor rains to reach them there, nor birds of prey to attack and rob them of the peace and joy of their heart.

St. Augustine on those words: *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God* (Matt. v. 9), says that Christ our Redeemer calls peacemakers blessed and children of God because there is nothing in them that contradicts or resists the will of God, but in all things they are conformable like good sons, who in everything seek to be like their father, having no other will this way or that but what their father has this way or that.

This is one of the most spiritual and essential points of spiritual life. He that shall arrive at the pitch of taking all things that befall him, great and small, as coming from the hand of God and so conforming himself to the divine will therein as that all his satisfaction is the satisfaction of God and the fulfilment of His most holy will—such a one has found a paradise on earth. *His abode is in peace and his dwelling on Mount Sion* (Psalm lxxv. 3). Such a one, says St. Bernard, may in all security and confidence sing the canticle of the Wise Man: *In all things I have sought rest, and shall dwell in the inheritance of the Lord* (Ecclus. xxiv. 11) because I have found the true repose and full and complete joy that no one can take away: *that your joy be full, and your joy no man shall take away from you* (John xvi. 22, 24). Oh, if we could succeed in placing all our satisfaction in the fulfilment of the will of God, so that our will should be ever His will and our satisfaction His satisfaction! Oh, that I were minded, O Lord, never to will or will not except as Thou willest and willest not, and that that were my consolation in all things! *It is good for me to cleave unto God, and put my hope in the Lord God* (Psalm lxxii. 28). Oh, what a good thing it would be for my soul to be thus united to God! Oh, how well off should we be, if we were always so united with Him as in all that we did and suffered to regard nothing but the accomplishment of the will of God, and that was all our satisfaction and delight! This is what that holy man, Thomas à Kempis, said: "He to whom all things are one and all lead to one

and all things are seen in one, can be steady in heart and rest peacefully on God."

CHAPTER V

That in God Alone Satisfaction Is to Be Found, and He Who Shall Set Up His Rest in Anything Else Shall Never Find True Satisfaction

THEY who place their satisfaction in God and His divine will, enjoy unbroken satisfaction and content, for, being built into that firm pillar, the will of God, they share in the immutability of the divine will and so are always firm and immovable and of one mind. But those who are attached to the things of the world and have set their heart and satisfaction in them, cannot have true and lasting content, for they go as things go and depend on things and are subject to the changes of things. The glorious St. Augustine declares this very well on that saying of the prophet: *He hath conceived sorrow and borne iniquity* (Psalm vii. 15). "Hold for certain," he says, "that you will always be liable to pain and disappointment so long as you do not set up your rest in that which none can take away from you without your will"—*Non enim potest labor finire nisi hoc quisque diligat quod invito non possit auferri*.

We read of our Father Francis Borgia that, when he came to Granada with the body of the empress and the time came to deliver over his charge, on opening the leaden coffin in which she lay and uncovering her face, it was found to be so changed, so hideous and disfigured, as to strike the beholders with horror. This made such an impression on him, and God touched his heart with such a sense of disillusionment of the things of the world, that he made a firm purpose, saying: "I resolve, my God, never more to serve a master who can die." Let us, then, take this resolution, which is a very good one: "I purpose, Lord, never more to set my heart on anything that can be taken from

me by death, on anything that can come to an end, on anything that another can take from me without my will," since in no other way can we find true contentment.

For, says St. Augustine, if you set your heart on that which they can take away from you without your will, it is clear that, when they do take it away, you must feel it. This is natural: a well-loved possession is not given up without grief; and the greater the love, the greater will be the grief. And in confirmation of this he says in another place: "He who shall wish to find satisfaction in himself shall be sad." If you set up your rest in such and such an office or in such an occupation or in being in such a place or anything like that, such a satisfaction can easily be taken from you by the superior, and so you will never live in contentment. If you set up your rest in exterior things or in the fulfilment of your own will, those things easily change: and when they do not change, you yourself change: for what pleases you and satisfies you today, tomorrow displeases and dissatisfies you. If you do not believe it, see it in that people of Israel, who, having the manna, grew weary and asked for other food; and seeing themselves free, at once turned their desire upon their old state of subjection and sighed after Egypt and the garlic and onions they ate there and longed many times to return there. You will never find satisfaction if you set up your rest in those things. But he who shall place all his satisfaction in God and in the fulfilment of His holy will, shall always live content, for God is everlasting, never changes, always remains such as He once for all is. "Would you attain to perpetual and everlasting joy and contentment," says the saint, "set up your rest in God, Who is everlasting."

Holy Writ marks this difference between the fool and the wise and holy man. *The fool changeth like the moon: the holy man remaineth in his wisdom unchanged like the sun* (Ecclus. xxvii. 12). The fool changes as the moon, today waxing and tomorrow waning; today you will see

him cheerful and tomorrow sad; now in one mood, now in another because he has placed his love and satisfaction in the changeable and perishable things of the world; and so he dances to the tune of such things and changes with their vicissitudes; like the sea, he goes with the moon—he is moon-struck. But the just and holy man endures like the sun; he keeps ever the same demeanor and is ever of the same mind; there is no waxing and waning in him; he is always cheerful and content because his contentment is in God and in the fulfilment of His most holy will, which none can alter.

Of that holy abbot called Deicola it is told that he always had a smile on his face. And when someone asked him why, he said: "Be what may be and come what may come, no one can take God away from me." *Christum a me tollere nemo potest*. This man had found true contentment because he had set up his rest in what could not fail, and none could take from him. Let us do the like. *Rejoice, ye just, in the Lord* (Psalm xxxii. 1). On these words St. Basil says: Observe that the prophet does not say: Rejoice in the abundance of earthly things, nor in your great ability, learning, and talents, nor in your vigorous health and great bodily strength, nor in the high name and reputation that you enjoy amongst men; but rejoice in the Lord; put all your satisfaction in God and in the fulfilment of His holy will, for that alone is sufficient, and all the rest together cannot satisfy nor afford true contentment.

St. Bernard, in a sermon which he preached on those words of St. Peter: *See, Lord, how we have left all things* (Matt. xix. 27), illustrates and proves this very well. All other things, he says, away from God may occupy the soul and heart of man, but they cannot satisfy it—*occupare potest, replere non potest*. *The covetous man will never have his fill of money*, says the Wise Man (Eccles. v. 9). He is hungry after pounds, shillings, and pence; but however much he gets, he will never be satisfied. And so of

all the things of the world—they cannot satisfy our soul. And this is St. Bernard's reason: Do you know why riches and all the things of the world cannot satisfy? It is because they are not the natural food of the soul—*quia non sunt naturales cibi animae*—nor proportional to its wants. Thus, as air and wind are not the natural food of our body nor proportional to it, and you would laugh if you saw a man starving to death open his mouth to the air like a chameleon, thinking thereby to satisfy and sustain himself, and you would take him for mad; so it is no less madness, says the saint, to think that man's rational soul, which is a spirit, is to be satisfied with temporal and sensible things. It may be puffed out, like the other with air, but it cannot be satisfied, for that is not its food. *Inflari potest, satiari non potest*. Give to every creature the sustenance that is proportional to it—to the body, bodily food; to the spirit, spiritual food. Thus they only shall be blessed who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.

The blessed St. Augustine further explains this reason in his "Soliloquies," speaking of the rational soul. He says: "Thou hast made the rational soul, O Lord, capable of Thy majesty, in such a way that nothing else can satisfy or sate it but Thyself." When the cavity and hollow of a ring is made to the measure of some definite precious stone, nothing else that you can put there can fit or completely fill that void, but only that particular precious stone to the measure of which it was made. If the cavity is triangular, no round thing can fill it. Now our soul is created to the image and likeness of the most Holy Trinity, leaving a vacancy and a cavity and a hollow in our heart capable of God and proportioned to receive God Himself. It is impossible for any other thing to bulk out and fill that vacant place but God Himself. All the round world will not suffice to fill it. "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee"—*Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te,*

et inquietum est cor nostrum donec in te requiescat (St. Augustine, "Confessions," i. 1).

A very good comparison, and one which illustrates this matter very well, is that common comparison which is drawn from the needle of the mariner's compass. The nature of that needle, after it has been touched by the magnet, is to point to the north, God having given it that natural inclination; and you will see how restless that needle is and how many times it turns and turns back again until it takes its direction to the north; and, that done, it is at once quiet. Now in this way God has created man, with this natural inclination in respect of Himself, as to his north star and last end; and so, until we fix our heart on God, we shall be always like that needle, restless and troubled. To whatever point of the revolving heavens that needle looks, it cannot be quiet; but when it looks to that one point of the heavens, the polar star, which does not revolve, there it fixes itself and is immovable. So as long as you set the eyes of your heart on the things of the world, changeable and perishable, you will not be able to find rest or content; set them on God, and you will find it.

This ought to be a great motive for us to seek after God, even though it were only in our own interest, since we all desire to find satisfaction. St. Augustine says: "We know, brethren, that every man desires joy, but not all seek joy where it is to be found. We cannot live without enjoyment; but whether men hit their mark or miss it all depends on this, whether they aim at and fix their eyes and heart on true satisfaction or on satisfactions apparent and false." The miser, the wrong-doer, the proud man, the ambitious, the glutton, all desire to attain satisfaction; but one puts his satisfaction in heaping up riches, another in gaining high honors and dignities, a third in eating and junketing, another in impure delights. They have not hit the mark in setting up their rest where they ought to have set it and so they will never find it; for all these things, and all that

there is in the world, is insufficient to satisfy the soul and give it true content. So the saint says: "Why, then, dost thou range far and wide, poor man, seeking good things for thy soul and body! Love that one Good wherein are all good things, and it suffices; desire that simple Good Which is all good, and it is enough. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, who fillest thy desire with good things* (Psalm cii. 5). Blessed and praised and glorified may He be for ever and ever. Amen."

CHAPTER VI

Another Way of Showing How Conforming Ourselves to the Will of God Is the Way to Find Contentment

THE glorious St. Augustine on those words of our Savior: *Whatever ye shall ask the Father in my name shall be granted you* (John xiv. 13), says that a man should not seek peace and quiet by means of doing his own will and gaining what he has a craving for, because that is not what is good for him or suits him—on the contrary, it may be a bad thing for him—but by acquiescing in the good or better lot that God offers him, and this it is that he ought to ask of God. *Quando nos delectant mala, et non delectant bona, rogare debemus potius Deum ut delectent bona quam ut concedantur mala.* If you find no relish in the accomplishment of the will of God, which is good, but your taste and appetite is bent on the accomplishment of your own will, you ought to beg and entreat of God, not that He would grant you what you wish for, but that He would grant you the grace to relish the accomplishment of His will, which is the good that suits you. He quotes to this effect that passage in Numbers (xi. 4) when the children of Israel grew weary of the manna from heaven which God sent them and desired and asked for flesh meat. God fulfilled their desire, but greatly to their cost, for *while the meat was still in their mouths, the anger of God came upon*

them, and slew the strongest and overthrew the flower of Israel (Psalm lxxvii. 31). God in chastisement made a great slaughter amongst them. It is clear that the manna from heaven which God sent them was better than the flesh meat which they sought and the onions and garlic of Egypt which they sighed after. Thus, says the saint, they should not have asked these things of God, but that He would heal their palate to relish the manna from heaven and find a taste in it; and in this way they would have had no temptation to desire other food, for they would have found all things in the manna and all the tastes that they could wish. In the same way, when you are under a fit of temptation or passion and your taste is unhealthy and so you have no relish for virtue and goodness, but like a sick man you crave after evil and noxious food, you must not let yourself be governed by your appetite nor seek for the fulfilment of your desire; for that would not be a means to find contentment, but rather to feel afterwards greater dissatisfaction and more restlessness and trouble. What you should desire and beg of God is that He would heal your palate and give you a taste for the accomplishment of His most holy will, since that is the good that is suited to you, and in this way you will come to gain true peace and true contentment.

St. Dorotheus has drawn this conclusion in another way or, rather, explains the same truth in another manner. He says that he who entirely conforms his will to the will of God so as to have no will one way or another but what God wills this way or that, comes by this means always to do his own will and always remain in great peace and quiet. Let us take an example from obedience, and thereby what we wish to say will be explained, and we shall arrive by one road at two virtues. We commonly say to those who are thinking of being religious and following the way of obedience: "See that here in religion you must not do your own will in anything." St. Dorotheus says: "Go along, you may quite well do it; and I will give you method by which

you may do your own will all day long, not only lawfully, but holily and with great perfection. Do you know how? The religious who is thoroughly obedient and has no will of his own, always does his own will because he makes another's will his; and thus, without seeking to do our own will, we always find it in what we are doing." Contrive that your own will shall be no other than the will of the superior, and so all day long you will go about doing your own will, and that with much perfection and merit. In this way I sleep as much as I wish, because I have no wish to sleep more than obedience ordains. I eat what I wish, since I have no wish to eat more than they give me. I pray as I wish, and read and work and do penance as I wish, because in all this I have no wish but to do what obedience has meted out for me and ordained, and so of all the rest. Thus a good religious, by not seeking to do his own will, comes to be always doing his own will. This is how good religious are so cheerful and content; it is the making of the will of obedience their own that keeps them cheerful and content.

Herein lies the whole issue of the ease or hardship of religious life, and hereon depend the cheerfulness and contentment of the religious. If you make up your mind to give up your own will and take the superior's will for yours, you will find religious life very easy and pleasant and you will live in great contentment and cheerfulness; but if you keep another will apart from that of your superior, you cannot live in religion; two different wills are incompatible one with the other. Even with the fact that we have in ourselves one will only, yet because we have a sensitive appetite that contradicts the will and reason, we can hardly get on with it, although this appetite is inferior and subordinate to our will; what would it be with two wills, each claiming the mastership! *No man can serve two masters* (Matt. vi. 24). The difficulty of religious life is not so much in the things themselves and the hardships that there are in it, as is the repugnance of our will and the fancies of our

imagination: it is that which makes things to us grievous and difficult. This is easily understood by the difference that we experience in ourselves when we are under temptation and when we are not. When we are free from temptations, we see that things become light and easy to us; but when temptation comes, and sadness and melancholy press upon us, that which used to be easy becomes very difficult, and we fancy that the very sky would fall were we to try it. The difficulty is not in the thing, since that is the same as it was yesterday, but in our bad disposition. When a sick man loathes his food, it is not the fault of the food, which is good and well cooked, but of the peccant humor of the patient, which makes the food seem bad and disagreeable; so it is here.

This is the favor which God does to those whom He calls to religious life; He gives them a relish and a liking for following the will of another. This is the grace of vocation with which God has favored us beyond our brethren who have stayed behind there in the world. Who has given you this facility which you find in giving up your own will and following that of another? Who has given you a new heart, wherewith you have abhorred the things of the world and found a taste for recollection and prayer and mortification? You were not born with it; no, certainly, but rather with the contrary, *for the feelings and thoughts of the human heart are inclined to evil from his youth* (Gen. viii. 21). It has been the grace of the Holy Ghost; it is that which like a good mother has put aloes on the breasts of the world, that that might become bitter to you which was before sweet, and sweetest honey on the things of virtue and religion in order to make that tasty and sweet to you which before seemed bitter and disagreeable. That saint said [St. Agatha]: "I give Thee infinite thanks, O Lord, for having guarded me and chosen me from childhood and for having rid my heart of the things of the world." It is no great thing that we have done in becoming religious; but great

and very grand is the favor that the Lord has done us in drawing us to religion and giving us a taste of the manna of heaven while other men are tasting and enjoying themselves on the garlic and onions of Egypt.

Sometimes I set myself to consider how people in the world give up their will and do the will of another in view of their temporal gains and interests, from the grandee by the side of the king to the lackey and stable-boy. They eat, as they say, to another man's hunger and sleep to another man's inclination for sleep; and they are so thoroughly trained to this and have so thoroughly made another's will their own that by this time they have got a liking for this style of life and take it for a pastime. *And this they do to gain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible* (I Cor. ix. 25). Is it much for us to get a taste for this style of life so well laid out as that of religion, and make our own the will of the superior, which is better than ours? If they for a little honor and temporal interest make another's will so thoroughly their own that now it is to them a delight and pastime to follow it, turning nights into days and days into nights, is it a great thing for us to do the same for the love of God and for the gaining of life everlasting? Let us, then, resolve to make the superior's will our own, and in this manner we shall always do our own will and live very contented and happy lives in religion, and very spiritual will be our cheerfulness and joy.

Let us now turn this to our purpose and apply it to the matter in hand. Let us make the will of God ours by conforming ourselves to it in all things and not otherwise willing or willing not than as God wills and wills not; in this manner we shall come to do always our own will and to live in great contentment and cheerfulness. It is clear that, if you will only what God wills, your will will be accomplished, and that is what you will and desire. Even the pagan Seneca hit the mark in saying this. "The most exalted and perfect thing in man," he says, "is to know how

to suffer with cheerfulness adversities and hardships, and bear all that happens as though it happened of his own will, for so man is obliged to will, knowing that this is the divine will." Oh, in what contentment should we live if we succeeded in making the will of God ours and in never willing aught but what He wills—not merely because in that way our will would always be accomplished, but chiefly for seeing that the will of God, Whom we love so much, is always accomplished and done! For although we ought to help ourselves by what has been said, yet we ought to come to dwell on this and on this we ought to found all our satisfaction, I mean in the contentment of God and the fulfilment of His most holy and divine will. *All things whatsoever he hath willed, the Lord hath done, in heaven, on earth, on the sea, and in all the depths* (Psalm cxxxiv. 6). All things that the Lord has willed, He has done; and He will do all the things that He shall will; and He can do as much as He can will, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *Power waiteth upon thy will* (Wisdom xii. 18). *All things are put in subjection to thee, and there is none that can resist thy will* (Esther xiii. 9; Rom. ix. 19).

CHAPTER VII

Of Other Benefits and Advantages That There Are in This Conformity to the Will of God

ANOTHER great benefit and advantage that there is in this practice is that this entire conformity and resignation to the will of God is one of the best and principal dispositions that we can bring on our part for the Lord to do us favors and fill us with good things. Thus, when God our Lord chose to make of St. Paul, who had been a persecutor of Christians, a preacher of the Gospel, he first disposed him and brought him over to this disposition. He sent a great light from heaven, which threw him from his horse, and opened the eyes of his soul and made him say: *Lord,*

what wilt thou have me to do? (Acts ix. 6). See me, O Lord, like a little clay in Thy hands, that Thou mayest make of me what Thou wilt. And so God made of him a chosen vessel, to carry and spread His name all the world over.

Of the holy virgin Gertrude we read that God told her: "Whoever desires that I should come to dwell in him without reserve, must hand over to Me the key of his own will and never ask it back again." For this our Father sets down this resignation and indifference as the principal disposition to receive great favors from God, and wishes everyone to have it who enters on the Exercises; and this is the foundation which he lays at the commencement of them, that we should be indifferent and detached from all things of the world, not desiring rather this than that, but desiring in all that the will of God may be accomplished and done in us. And in the rules and annotations which he puts to help as well him who gives the Exercises as him who makes them, he says: "It will be a very great help for him who makes the Exercises to entrust and offer himself freely and in all to the hands of God, that God may make of him and his whatsoever shall please Him." And the reason of this being such a great disposition and means for the Lord to do us favors, is that on the one hand our way is thereby made clear of the lets and hindrances that may arise out of our evil affections and desires; and on the other hand the more a man trusts in God, putting himself entirely in His hands and not seeking anything except what He wills, the more God is obliged to look after him and all that concerns him.

In another way also this conformity to the will of God is a very effectual means for acquiring and gaining all virtues, since these are acquired by the exercise of their acts. This is the natural way to acquire habits, and in this manner God wills to give us virtue, for He wishes works of grace to be done in accordance with works of nature. Exer-

cise yourself, then, in this resignation and conformity to the will of God, and in this manner you will exercise yourself in all virtues and so you will come to gain them all. Sometimes you will be offered occasions of humility, at other times of obedience, at others of poverty, at others of patience, and so of the rest of the virtues. And the more you exercise yourself in this resignation and conformity to the will of God and the more you grow and perfect yourself in it, the more will you grow and become perfect in all virtues. *Unite thyself with God and endure, that as time goeth on thou mayest grow and thrive in thy life* (Ecclus. ii. 3). Unite thyself to God, conform thyself in all to His will. *Fasten thyself upon God (conglutinare Deo)*, says another version, and in this way you will grow and improve much.

To this end the masters of spiritual life advise us—and it is marvelous good advice—to fix our eyes on some higher virtue which includes in itself the rest, and aim at that chiefly in meditation, and direct our examen and all our exercises thereto; for by fixing our eyes on one thing, it is easier to compass it; and, that gained, all is gained. Now one of the chief things upon which we can fix our eyes for this purpose is this entire resignation and conformity to the will of God. Thus meditation and examen will be employed upon it even though we spend on it many years, aye, and our whole life. On those words of the Apostle St. Paul, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6), St. Bernard cries: “O short speech, but full; it embraces all, it leaves nothing out: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Brief speech, but compendious; living, effectual, and worthy of all admiration.” If, then, you are seeking a brief and compendious lesson in the gaining of perfection, here it is: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* And with the prophet: *My heart is ready, O Lord, my heart is ready, disposed and prepared for all that thou requirest of me* (Psalm lvi. 8). Keep this ever in your mouth and in your heart; and in proportion as you grow in it, you will grow in perfection.

There is also another good point and advantage in this exercise; it is that we may draw from it an excellent remedy against a certain sort and manner of temptations which often occur. The devil contrives at times to disturb us with temptations of conditional suppositions and questions. "If the other fellow said this, what would you reply?" "If that were to happen, what would you do?" "How would you behave in such and such a case?" And, being the subtle opponent that he is, he puts things in such a way that, whichever side we take, we seem to find ourselves in a hole, and we cannot hit upon a way out, finding a snare set wherever we turn. Nor does the devil care whether the allegation he uses to catch us be true or mere camouflage and fiction. His trick being to draw a man into some evil consent, it is all one to him what instrument he uses. In these temptations they commonly say that one is not obliged to answer either Yes or No; rather it is better not to answer at all. This advice is especially suitable for scrupulous people, since once they begin to bandy words with the devil and go into question and answer with him, they are doing just what he wants, for he will be never at a loss for something to answer back; and the best to be expected for men coming out of the skirmish is that they shall come out with a broken head.

But there is an answer that I find good and profitable for these temptations, and I think it is better to give this answer than not to answer at all. It is what we have just been saying. To any one of these posers one may answer with eyes shut: "If that is the will of God, I want it;" "I should wish in that case to do what God might wish;" "I refer myself in all to the will of God;" "I would do therein whatever might be my duty;" "The Lord would give me grace not to offend Him in that matter, but that I might do what was His will." This is a general answer, meeting every requirement; and there is no difficulty, but much facility, in thus sticking to generalities. "If it is the will of

God, it is good;" "If it is the will of God, it is the better thing;" "If it is the will of God, it is that which better suits me." I may in all security plant my feet on the will of God and say all these things; and thereby the devil will be handsomely made game of and put to shame, and we shall be well satisfied and encouraged by the victory. As in temptations against faith we are advised—scrupulous people in particular—not to answer in detail, but to say in general: "I hold and believe all that Holy Mother Church holds and believes," so in these temptations it is a good remedy not to answer in detail, but to betake ourselves to the will of God, which is sovereignly just and perfect.

CHAPTER VIII

*In Which It Is Confirmed by Examples How Pleasing to
God Is This Exercise of Conformity to His Will, and
the Great Perfection There Is in It*

CAESARIUS relates how there dwelt in a monastery a monk to whom God had given such a grace of working miracles that by the mere touch of his clothes or of the cincture which he wore, he healed the sick. His abbot, attentively considering this and not seeing in that monk any special effulgence of sanctity, called him apart and asked him to tell the reason why God worked such miracles through him. He answered that he did not know; "For," said he, "I do not fast more than the others or take more disciplines or penances, nor spend more time in prayer nor watch more. All I can say is that prosperity does not elate nor adversity discourage me; nothing that happens troubles or disturbs me; my soul is in the same peace and quiet under all circumstances, how various soever they be, whether they touch me or my neighbor." The abbot said to him: "Were you not somewhat troubled and upset that other day, when that knight our enemy set fire to our gran-

ary and burned it?" "No," he said, "I felt no trouble in my soul, since I have already left all that in the hands of God, as well prosperity as adversity, as well little as great; I take all with equal thanksgiving as coming from His hand." Then the abbot understood what was the cause of this power of working miracles.

Blosius relates that a poor beggarman of very perfect life, being asked by a theologian how he had attained to perfection, answered in this manner. "I have determined to give myself over to God's will alone, to which I have so conformed my own that whatever God wills, I will also. When hunger exhausts me, when cold pinches me, I praise God. Be the weather fair, or foul and stormy, I likewise praise God. Whatever lot He gives me or permits to come upon me—be it prosperous or unfortunate; be it sweet, or bitter and disagreeable—I receive it at His hand with great alacrity as a very good thing, resigning myself to it in all humility. Never have I been able to find repose in anything that was not God; and now I have found unto myself God, in Whom I enjoy repose and peace everlasting."

The same author tells of a holy virgin who, being asked how she had attained perfection, replied: "All troubles and mishaps I took with great conformity as coming from the hand of God; and anyone who did me any wrong or gave me any annoyance, I took care to pay off by doing him some special service. I never complained to anyone of my troubles, but had recourse only to God, of Whom I received new strength and consolation." Of another virgin of great sanctity he says that, being asked on what practices she had gained such great perfection, she answered with much humility: "I never had pains and afflictions so great but that I desired to suffer more for love of God, taking them for great gifts of His and judging myself unworthy of them."

Tauler tells of a servant of God, wholly resigned into His hands, whom different persons asked to pray for cer-

tain affairs. She said she would, and sometimes forgot, yet all that they commended to her succeeded just as they had asked. They came back to return thanks to her, considering that the success was due to her prayers, and she was ashamed and told them to thank God, as she had had no part in the matter. Many came to her on this errand. She made a loving complaint to God, that all the intentions which they commended to her He accomplished in such sort that they came to her to return thanks to her when she had had nothing to do with it. The Lord answered: "See, daughter, the day that thou gavest thy will to Me, I gave thee Mine; and, though thou asked Me nothing in particular, as I understand what thy wishes are, I accomplish them as thou desirest."

In the lives of the Fathers there is told of a farmer whose fields and vineyards always bore better crops than those of his neighbors. His neighbors asking him how that was, he answered that he was not astonished at having better crops than they had, seeing that he had always the weather he wanted. At that they were still more surprised and asked how that could be. He replied: "I never wish for any other weather but what God wishes; and as I wish what God wishes, He gives me crops as I wish."

Sulpicius Severus relates in his *Life of the blessed St. Martin*, bishop, that in all his intercourse with him he never saw him out of humor or sad, but always in great peace and cheerfulness. And the reason of that he says was because, whatever happened to him, he took it as sent from the hand of God and so conformed himself in all things to God's will with great equanimity and alacrity.

CHAPTER IX

Of Some Facts That Will Render This Exercise of Conformity with the Will of God Easy and Pleasant

THAT this exercise of conformity to the will of God may be made to us easy and pleasant, it is necessary ever to bear in mind the foundation that we laid at the beginning, to the effect that no adversity or affliction can come to us that does not pass through the hands of God and is not checked and registered by His will. Christ our Redeemer taught us this truth, not only in word, but also by His example. When on the night of His Passion He bade St. Peter sheathe his sword, He added: *The chalice that my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?* (John xviii. 11). He did not say "the chalice that Judas and the scribes and Pharisees have contrived for me," for He knew well that all these were nothing but creatures who waited upon the Father; and what they did in malice and envy, the eternal Father in His infinite wisdom and goodness ordained for the healing of mankind. So he said also to Pilate, who said that he had power to crucify Him or to set Him free: *Thou shouldst not have any power over me, were it not given thee from on high* (John xix. 11); which means, as the saints explain, "were it not done by the counsel and ordinance of God." Thus all comes from on high by the arrangement and order of God.

The Apostle St. Peter says this marvelously well in the fourth chapter of the Acts, explaining that saying of the prophet: *Why have the nations raged, and peoples devised vain plans, against the Lord and against his Christ?* (Psalm ii. 1). He says in explanation: *Truly in this city Herod and Pontius Pilate allied themselves with the Gentiles and with the people of Israel to carry out that which thy power and counsel had determined should be done* (Acts iv. 27). The princes and powers of the earth allied themselves together

against Christ our Redeemer to execute and carry into effect what had been decreed and determined in the consistory of the most holy Trinity; they could not go beyond that. And we see that, when God did not will it, all the power of Herod was insufficient to deprive Him of life as a child; and, though Herod massacred all the babes in the neighborhood from two years and under, he could do nothing with Him Whom he sought because He did not will to die then. And the Jews and Pharisees many times sought to lay hands on Christ and put Him to death. On one occasion they took Him to the top of a mountain on which their city was built, to cast Him headlong; and, says the holy Gospel, *He passing through the midst of them went his way* (Luke iv. 30)—in great peace, because He had not chosen that manner of death, and so they could not put Him to it. Another time they sought to stone Him and already had their hands lifted up on high with their stones to throw at Him; and Christ our Redeemer very quietly set Himself to reason with them and ask them: *Many good deeds have I done you: for which of them seek ye to stone me?* (John x. 32). He did not permit nor give them leave to stir their hands, *because his hour was not yet come* (John vii. 30). But when the hour was come at which He had determined to die, then they were able to do what He had determined to suffer because He chose it and gave them leave then to do it. *This is your hour, and the power of darkness* (Luke xxii. 53), as He said to them when they came to take Him. *Every day I was with you in the Temple, and ye did not lay hands on me*, because the hour was not come; now it is come, and so you see me here, *I am he* (John xviii. 8).

What did Saul do there, a figure of Christ's persecutors; what diligence and contrivance did he use to get David into his hands, a king of Israel against a private man, *persecuting one flea*, as David himself says (I Kings xxiv. 15; xxvi. 20). And for all that he could do nothing, for the reason that *God had not given him into his hands* (I Kings xxiii.

14). And therein lies the whole point. St. Cyprian observes very well on those words, *Lead us not into temptation* (Matt. vi. 13), that all our fear and all our devotion and attention in temptations and distresses should be set on God, because neither the devil nor anyone else can do us any harm if God does not first give him power to do it.

In the second place, although this truth, well established, is sufficient and of great efficacy to conform us in all things to the will of God, nevertheless we must not stop there, but pass on to another truth that follows from this and is noted by the saints. It is this, that along with the fact that all things come from the hand of God we are further to understand that they come for our good and improvement. The pains of the damned come from the hand of God, but not for their improvement and correction, but for their chastisement. But as for the pains and labors that God sends men in this life, whether they be just or sinners, we must always so trust in His infinite goodness and mercy as to believe that He sends them for our good and because that is what makes better for our salvation. So said holy Judith to her townsmen when they were in that affliction and so grave crisis, surrounded by their enemies: *Let us believe that God hath sent us these troubles, not for our ruin, but for our amendment and profit* (Judith viii. 27). Of a will so good as that of God, a will that loves us so much, we may rest assured that He seeks only what is good, and what is better and more suited to our condition.

Thirdly, to profit more by this truth (and this is a most efficacious means of attaining conformity to the will of God), we must not be content with understanding speculatively and in the abstract that all things come from the hand of God, take it mechanically and at the word of command, like soldiers firing a volley, simply because faith tells us so or because so we have read or heard, but we must actuate and quicken that faith, bringing ourselves to under-

stand and feel it practically. So we must come to take all things that happen to us as if we saw visibly and sensibly Christ our Lord saying to us: "Take, son, this that I send you: My will is that you do or suffer just now this and this." In this way it will be very easy and pleasant to conform ourselves in all things to the will of God. Surely, if Jesus Christ Himself in person were to appear to you and say: "See, son, this is what I want of thee; I want thee to suffer for Me just now this hardship or infirmity; I want thee to serve Me in this office or ministry"—though it were the hardest thing in the world, you would do it with hearty good will all the days of your life and count yourself very lucky in that God was pleased to make use of you in that way; and by His commanding it you would understand that that was the better thing and more proper for your salvation and you would not doubt of it, nor even at first thoughts would you ever turn against it.

In the fourth place, it is needful that at meditation we should exercise ourselves, and put our strength into this exercise, digging and going deep into this rich mine of the providence, so paternal and so particular, that God has over us, because that is the way to strike on the treasure, as we shall further declare in the following chapters.

CHAPTER X

Of the Paternal and Particular Providence That God Has over Us, and of the Filial Confidence That We Should Have in Him

ONE of the greatest riches and treasures that we enjoy who have the faith, is the providence so particular and so paternal that God exercises over us, so that we are certain that nothing can befall or happen to us but what is checked and registered by the hand of God. So says the Prophet David: *Thou hast compassed us about and guarded*

us, O Lord, by thy good will as by a strong shield (Psalm v. 13). We are surrounded on all sides by the good will of God, so that nothing can come in upon us without it and so there is nothing to fear, for God will not allow anything to gain entrance or reach us except it be for our greater good and profit. *For God hath gathered me into his tabernacle, he hath hidden me in the most secret part thereof in the day of trouble*, says the Royal Prophet (Psalm xxvi. 5). In the most secret part of His tabernacle and in the innermost of His secret chamber, God keeps us hidden; He guards us under the shadow of His wings. And more than this, he says: *Thou wilt hide them in the most hidden and secret part of thy face* (Psalm xxx. 21), which are the eyes. In the pupils of His eyes He hides us, and so another reading says, *in the eyes of thy face* (*in oculis faciei tue*). God makes us as the pupils of His eyes, that so that may be well fulfilled which is said in another place: *Guard me, O Lord, as the apple of thine eye* (Psalm xvi. 8). As the pupils of His eyes, so are we guarded under His shelter and protection. *Whoever shall touch you*, God says, *toucheth me in the apple of mine eye* (Zach. ii. 8). Nothing can be imagined more sumptuous, more estimable and desirable, than that.

Oh, if we could thoroughly know this and understand it well! How sheltered and secured should we feel; how confident and consoled should we be in all our necessities and afflictions! If a son on earth had a very rich and powerful father, a great favorite at court, how confident and assured would he feel in all transactions and occurrences that the favor and protection of his father would never fail him! How much greater reason, then, have we to feel this confidence and security, considering that we have Him for our Father in Whose hands is all power in heaven and on earth and that nothing can happen to us but what passes first by His hand! If this is the sort of confidence which such a son has in his father, and therewith he sleeps secure,

how much more should we have it in Him Who is more of a father than all fathers and in comparison with Whom the others do not deserve the name of fathers! There are no tenderesses of love to compare with what God feels for us, infinitely surpassing all the loves that all the fathers on earth can feel. Of such a Father and Lord we may well feel confident and secure that all He sends us will be for our greater good and profit because the love that He bears us in His only-begotten Son will not let Him do anything else but seek the good of one for whose sake He delivered over that Son to the torments of the Cross. *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how can it be that with him he hath not given us all things?* says the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. viii. 32). He Who has given us the greater, how shall He fail to give us the less?

And if all men ought to have this confidence in God, how much more religious, whom He has specially adopted for His own and given them the spirit and heart of sons and caused them to renounce and leave their parents according to the flesh and take Him for their Father! What heart and love of a Father and what care and providence will God have over such! *For my father and mother have left me, but the Lord hath taken me to his keeping* (Psalm xxvi. 10). Oh, what a good Father you have taken in exchange for him whom you have left! With all the more reason and all the more confidence may you say: *The Lord is my shepherd, and nothing will be wanting to me* (Psalm xxii. 1). God has taken upon Himself the charge and care of all my affairs; nothing will be wanting to me. *I am a beggar and needy man, but the Lord hath care of me* (Psalm xxxix. 18). God has care of me; God is solicitous about me: who will not take comfort at this and melt away in love of God! Why, Lord, Thou hast charge of me and takest as much care of me as though Thou hadst no other creature to govern but me alone! Oh, that we could dig down and go right deep into this love and providence and

protection, so paternal and particular, that God has over us!

Hence springs in the true servants of God a very familiar and filial confidence in Him, which in some cases is so great that there is no son in the world who in all his affairs has such confidence in the protection of his father as they have in that of God. For they know that He has for them more than the heart of a father and more than that of a mother, which is usually the more tender. So He says by *Isaias*: *What mother is there that forgetteth her infant son, and hath not a heart of pity for him that came forth from her womb? But if it were possible that there should be any mother in whom this forgetfulness found place, it shall never find place in me, saith the Lord: for I bear thee written in my hands, and thy walls are ever before me* (*Isaias* xlix. 15-16). As though He would say: "I carry thee in my hands and I keep thee ever before my eyes to shelter thee and defend thee." And through the same prophet He declares this by another comparison, very comforting: *I bear thee within my womb* (*Isaias* xli. 3). As the woman who is with child carries her babe within her womb, and that serves for house, litter, wall, support, and all things, in the same way God says that He carries us in His womb. Hereby the servants of God live in such confidence and hold themselves so succored and provided for in all things that they are never troubled or disturbed by the various happenings of this life. *In the season of drought he shall not be solicitous* (*Jerem.* xvii. 8). The heart of the just, says the Prophet *Jeremy*, feels no anxiety, nor loses its tranquillity and repose under the variety of events and occurrences because they know that nothing can occur without the will of their Father. They rest in full assurance and confidence on His great love and goodness, believing that all will be for their greater good and that all that they lose on the one side will come back to them on the other in the shape of something of greater worth and value.

From this so familiar and filial confidence that the just have in God there arises in their soul that great peace, tranquillity, and sense of security which they enjoy, according to the word of Isaias: *My people shall sit down in the beauty of peace and in tabernacles of confidence, and in a resting-place well furnished in all sufficiency of good things* (Isaias xxxii. 18). The prophet joins peace and confidence together. And in reality peace of mind is but a necessary effect of confidence; and he who confides in God fears nothing, nor troubles himself at whatever occurs, since he knows God is his protector. *I will repose and sleep in peace*, says the psalmist, *because it is you, O Lord, who out of your singular goodness have confirmed me in hope* (Psalm iv. 9-10). And this filial confidence causes not only great peace, but great joy and gladness, as says St. Paul: *The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope and the power of the Holy Ghost* (Rom xv. 13). This belief that God knows what He is doing and that He does it for our good, makes us insensible to those disturbances and disappointments and distresses that they feel who look at things with eyes of flesh; nay, further, it makes us feel great joy and gladness on all occasions. And the more this confidence abounds, the more will abound also this joy and spiritual gladness, because the more a soul trusts and loves, the calmer and more assured she is that all must turn to good; she cannot believe or hope anything less of the infinite goodness and love of God.

This it is that made the saints so quiet and unconcerned in the midst of labors and dangers that they feared neither men nor devils nor wild beasts nor any other irrational creatures, because they knew that they could not touch them without the permission and will of God. St. Athanasius relates of the blessed St. Anthony that one time the devils appeared to him in various fearful shapes, in the form of wild beasts, lions, tigers, bulls, serpents, and scorpions, surrounding and threatening him with their claws,

teeth, and dreadful roarings and hissings, so that it looked as though they were going to eat him up. The saint mocked them and said to them: "If you had any strength, one alone of you would be a match for one man; but because you are weak and God has taken away your strength, you contrive to band together in a great rout to frighten me. If the Lord has given you any power over me, you see me here—eat me up; but if you have no power or permission from God, why do you labor in vain?" Here we see well the great peace and fortitude that was due in that saint to his conviction that they could do nothing without the will of God, and his perfect conformity to that will. Of this we have many examples in ecclesiastical history.

Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read a similar example in the fifth book of his Life; and in the second book it is told of him how on a voyage he once made to Rome there arose a frightful tempest which broke the mast by the force of the wind and caused the loss of much tackle. All were afraid and prepared for death, thinking that their last hour had come. In this so dangerous plight, when all were struck with terror of death, it is said that he felt no fear; the only thing that grieved him was the thought that he had not served God so well as he should have done. But for the rest he found nothing to be afraid of, *because the winds and the sea obey him* (Matt. viii. 27); they obey God, and without His leave and will waves and storms do not arise and can do no harm to anyone. This is the familiar and filial confidence in God, this is the tranquillity and sense of security to which we should endeavor to arrive by the grace of the Lord through this practice of conformity with the will of God. We must dig down and go deep by means of meditation and consideration in this most rich mine of the providence, so paternal and particular, that God exercises over us. I am certain that nothing can do anything to me, neither men, nor devils, nor any creature whatsoever, beyond what God wishes and gives leave for; let it

be done, then, in God's name, since I refuse nothing nor seek anything else but the will of God.

We read of St. Gertrude that nothing could ever drive away or darken in her the constant and secure confidence which she ever had in the most bounteous mercy of God—no danger, no tribulation, no loss of goods, or other impediments, not even her own sins and defects; because she kept the most assured confidence that all things, prosperity and adversity alike, were turned by Divine Providence to her good. On one occasion the Lord said to this holy virgin: "This absolute confidence which a man has in Me, believing that I really can, know now, and will faithfully help him in all things, captivates My heart and appeals so strongly to My mercy that in dealing with such a man, so to speak, I can neither show him favor, for the satisfaction that I take in seeing him so attached to Me notwithstanding and for the increase of his merit; nor yet can I leave him in the lurch and favor him not, considering Who I am and the great love that I bear him." He speaks in human style like one who is held in suspense by love.

Of St. Mechtildis it is related that the Lord said to her: "It gives Me much pleasure when men trust in My goodness and rely upon Me; for whoever shall humbly confide in Me, and trust Me well, I will do him favors in this life and in the next I will reward him beyond his deserts. The more a man shall trust and count upon My goodness, the more he shall obtain; for it is impossible for a man not to obtain that which he piously believes and hopes that he shall obtain, when I have promised it; and for this reason it is advantageous for a man to expect of Me great things and trust Me well." And when the same Mechtildis asked the Lord what it was that it was right for her chiefly to believe of His unspeakable goodness, He replied: "Believe with certain faith that I will receive thee after thy death as a father receives his long-sought son; and that never did father so faithfully divide his estate with his only son as I

will impart to thee all My goods and myself. Whoever shall firmly and with humble charity believe this of My goodness, shall attain to bliss."

CHAPTER XI

Of Some Passages and Examples of Holy Scripture to Aid Us in Gaining This Familiar and Filial Confidence in God

FOR the first point it will be well to see the great habit which those ancient Fathers had of attributing all events to God, by whatever channel they came. Holy Scripture relates (Gen. xlii.) how Joseph's brethren were coming home with wheat brought from Egypt. Now Joseph had instructed his steward to put tied up at the mouth of each one's sack the money that they had paid for the wheat, just as they had brought it with them. On their journey they came to stop at a house and they had a mind each one to give his beast a feed of wheat. The first to open his sack saw at once his purse with the money in it and told the others. Each one addressed himself to his sack and they found there the money. The narrative says then that they said in trouble to one another: *What is this that God hath done us?* (Gen. xlii. 28). It is to be well taken note of that they did not say: "This is a trap that they have set for us; there is some fraud here." Nor did they say: "The steward by carelessness has left each one's money in his sack." Nor did they say: "Perhaps he wanted to make a present to us of the money in alms." But they attributed it to God and said: "What can this mean that God hath done to us?"—confessing that, as not a leaf stirs on a tree but by His will, so neither has this happened but by His will. And when Jacob came into Egypt, Joseph went to visit him with his sons, and the old man asked, "What children are these?" and he replied: *These are my sons that God hath given me in this land of Egypt* (Gen. xlviii. 9). Jacob made the same answer on meeting his brother Esau,

when the latter asked him what children were those he brought with him; he replied: *These are the sons whom the Lord hath given me* (Gen. xxxiii. 5). And, offering him a present, he said to him: *Receive this present*—he calls it a *blessing* of God, with Whom to bless is to do good—which, he says, *God hath done for me, who is he who giveth all things*—*Suscipe benedictionem quam attuli tibi, et quam donavit mihi Deus tribuens omnia* (Gen. xxxiii. 11).

Likewise, when David in great anger was going to destroy the house of Nabal, and Abigail his wife came out to meet him with a present to appease him, David said: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath sent thee today to me, that I might not go on to shed the blood of the house of Nabal* (I Kings xxv. 32). As though he would say: "Thou hast not come of thyself, but God has sent thee that I might not sin; to Him I owe this favor—may He be praised for it." This was the common language of those saints, and should also be ours.

But coming more to the point, the history of holy Joseph, which we have already touched upon, makes marvelously well to our purpose. His brethren out of envy, that he might not come to be in command over them and be their lord, as he had dreamed, sold him for a slave to some traders of Egypt. This means, which they took for his undoing and that he might not come into command, God took to fulfil the designs of His divine providence and bring him to be lord over them and over all the land of Egypt. So said Joseph himself to his brethren when he discovered himself to them, and they were amazed and bewildered at the event. *Be not afraid or alarmed at having sold me into these parts: it was for your good that God sent me here that ye might have food, and the people of Israel might not perish and come to an end. God sent me: it was no design of yours: they were the counsels of God. Can we possibly resist the will of God?* (Gen. xlv. 5-8). Now who will not hereupon trust God? Who will fear the contrivances of men and the

reverses of the world, since we see that they are directed to a sure end by God and that the means which men take to persecute us and do us harm, are the very means that God takes for our good and increase? *My counsel shall stand, and all my will be done* (Isaias xli. 10). Go here and go there, go where you will, but in the end the will of God must be accomplished, and He will direct the means thereto.

St. Chrysostom dwells to this effect upon another particular of this history, how Pharaoh's cupbearer, after being restored to his office, forgot his interpreter Joseph for two whole years, though he had enjoined upon him so earnestly to remember him and intercede for him with Pharaoh. Think you, says the saint, that it was by chance that he forgot? It was no chance; it was the resolution and plan of God, Who wished to wait for the nick of time and a happy conjuncture to draw Joseph out of prison with greater glory and honor. For, if he had remembered him, possibly his influence might have availed to deliver him immediately from prison in some obscure manner, without his being either heard or seen. But as God our Lord did not intend him to go out in this manner, but with high honor and authority, He allowed the other to forget him for two years, that so might come the time of Pharaoh's dreams, and then at the instance of the king under stress of necessity he might come out with the majesty and glory wherewith he did come out to be lord of the whole land of Egypt. God knew very well, says St. Chrysostom, as a most wise worker in metals, the time for the gold to be in the fire and the time to draw it out.

In the First Book of Kings we have another history in which the providence of God shines clearly out in many particular details. God had told the Prophet Samuel that He would mark out for him the man who was to be king of Israel, that he might anoint him: *Tomorrow at this hour I will send thee him whom thou shalt anoint as King* (I Kings ix. 16). That man was Saul, and the way in which He sent

him was this. His father's asses were lost, and his father told him to go and seek them. He took with him a stout young servant, and they ranged hill and dale, but could not discover them nor find any trace of them. Saul was minded to return, since he thought that they were getting late and that his father would be anxious about them. The boy said to him: "We must not go back home without them: but there is in this town a man of God (it was the Prophet Samuel); let us go there for him to tell us about them." On this account they went to Samuel; and when they came, God said to him: *This is the man whom I said I would send thee: him thou must anoint for king* (I Kings ix. 17). Oh, the secret judgments of God! His father sent him to find the she-asses, but God sent him to Samuel to be anointed king. How different are the designs of men from the designs of God! How far were Saul and his father from thinking that he was going to be anointed king! Oh, how far are you many times, and your father and your superior, from what God intends! From the quarter where you least think it, from there does God draw what He wants. It was not without the will of God that the asses were lost; it was not by chance that his father sent Saul after them, nor was it by chance that he could not find them, nor the advice that the boy gave that they should go to consult the prophet about them; but all this was the ordinance and arrangement of God, Who took these means to send Saul to Samuel to anoint him king, as He had said. Your father thought that he was sending you to study at Seville or Salamanca that you might become a great doctor and afterwards might hold some preferment in which you might live like a gentleman; and it was not that, but God was sending you there to receive you into His house and make you a religious. St. Augustine thought, when he went from Rome to Milan—and the prefect of the city, Symmachus, thought the same—that he was going to lecture on rhetoric; and it was not that, but God was sending him to St. Ambrose to be converted.

Let us set ourselves to consider the variety of vocations and the various means whereby God has drawn to religion this person and that, which is certainly matter of admiration. Had it not been for I know not what little thing or trifling incident, you would never have been a religious—and all these were contrivances and inventions of God to draw you to religion. Let this be observed, by the way, for the benefit of some who sometimes have a recurring temptation to think that their vocation cannot be of God because it came by means of trifling things like those. That is a delusion of the devil your enemy, envious of the state and condition in which you are; for it is the usual way of God to make use of these means for the end which He intends; namely, His own greater glory and your good advantage. We have many examples of this in the lives of the saints. *Hath God care of oxen?* (I Cor. ix. 9) or of she-asses? But He uses these means for you to come to reign like Saul: for “to serve God is to reign.”

When afterwards the Prophet Samuel went on the part of God to reprove Saul for that disobedience which he had committed in not destroying Amalec as God had commanded him, Samuel after having reproved him turned his back to go away. Saul seized his mantle, that he might not go, but might intercede for him with God. The text says that a piece of Samuel's mantle remained in Saul's hand, the garment being torn. Who would not but think that this tearing and dividing of the prophet's mantle happened by chance, because Saul pulled hard, and the mantle was old and rotten? Yet it did not happen without a particular disposition of God, to make it understood that this signified that Saul was set aside and deprived of the kingdom for his sin. So Samuel, seeing what was done, said to Saul: By this division of my mantle understand that *the Lord hath set thee aside and removed thee from the kingdom of Israel, and hath given it over to thy neighbor, who is a better man than thou* (I Kings xv. 28).

In the same First Book of Kings we read that one time Saul had surrounded David and his followers as in a circle (I Kings xxiii. 26), in such sort that now David despaired of being able to make his escape. In this hard pressure there came a courier in haste to tell Saul that the Philistines had entered into the country and were pillaging and destroying all before them. Saul had to raise the blockade and go off to meet the greater need, and so David escaped. This raid of the Philistines was not by chance, but a contrivance of God thereby to set David free.

Another time the satraps of the Philistines cast David out of their army and induced King Achis to bid him return home, and that though the king kept him in his company with great good will and had great confidence in him. *But, as he said, you do not please the satraps* (I Kings xxix. 6). It looked as though this action of the satraps was a mere piece of chance, but it was not chance nor for the end that they thought it, but by the special providence of God, for David on his return found that the Amalekites had set fire to his town of Siceleg and taken captive all his women and children, even David's own wives. He went after them and destroyed them and recovered all the booty and prisoners without exception, which would not have happened if the satraps had not cast him out of their army; and to this God directed their design, though they directed it to something else (I Kings xxx.).

In the history of Esther this particular providence of God shines out clearly in many minute details. What out-of-the-way means did not God use to deliver the people of the Jews from the cruel sentence of King Ashuerus! By what means did He displace Vashti and choose Esther for queen, who was of the people of the Jews, that she might afterwards intercede for them! It looks like chance that Mardochee got wind of the treason that some were plotting against King Ashuerus, and that he came to reveal it, and that the king was lying awake that night and could not

sleep, and that he made them bring him the chronicles of his times to entertain him, and that in the reading they hit upon that good deed of Mardochee; yet nothing of this happened by chance, but by the high counsel of God and His special providence, who wished by these means to deliver His people. And so Mardochee sent a message to Esther, when she shrank from entering to speak to the king and excused herself on the plea of not having been called. "Who knoweth but that the reason of thy having been made queen was that thou mightest be able to help us at this time?"

Holy Scripture and ecclesiastical histories are full of like examples, that we may learn to attribute all events to God and take them as coming from His hand for our greater good and profit. In the book of the memoirs of St. Clement there is recounted a notable thing to this purpose. When Simon Magus was being tracked out by St. Peter, St. Barnabas had converted St. Clement at Rome. The latter went to St. Peter, told him of his conversion, and begged to be instructed in the things of the faith. St. Peter said to him: "You have come at an opportune moment, for tomorrow there is arranged to be a public disputation between me and Simon Magus; we will go there and you shall hear what you ask." At this moment there came in two disciples, and told St. Peter how Simon Magus sent them to say how some business had turned up, and beg that the disputation should be put off for three days; and St. Peter said, "Let it be so." When he came out, St. Clement was much distressed; and St. Peter, seeing him sad, asked him: "What is the matter, son, that I see you sad?" St. Clement answered: "I would have you know, father, that I am much distressed at seeing the disputation put off, which I could have wished to have been tomorrow." Here is a thing much to note: in a matter of so small weight St. Peter took his hand, and preached him a great sermon. "See, son," he said, "among the heathen, when things are not done as they wish, they are much put out; but we who know that God guides and

governs all, must hold on in great consolation and peace. Know, son, that it has been for your greater good that this has happened, since now you will understand better. Had the disputation come off immediately, you would not have understood so well; since it has been put off, you will understand it better, for between now and then I will instruct you, and you will relish and profit much by it."

I wish to conclude with an example that we have in the Life of our blessed Father Ignatius, in which also this same truth comes out in strong colors; it is the going of Father Francis Xavier to the East Indies. It is a thing worthy of consideration, the way this holy man came to go to the Indies. Our Father Ignatius had named for this mission Fathers Simon Rodriguez and Nicholas de Bobadilla. Father Simon at the time was ill with a quartan ague; nevertheless, he embarked immediately for Portugal. He wrote to Father Bobadilla to come from Calabria to Rome. He came, but so emaciated by the privations and labors of the journey and so weak and injured in one leg when he arrived in Rome—and at the same time the ambassador Don Pedro Mascarenas was on the point of returning to Portugal and could not wait for Bobadilla to get well, nor did he wish to set out without the second Father that had to go to India—that in place of Master Bobadilla there was substituted Father Master Francis Xavier, with the happiest result, and he set out at once with the ambassador for Portugal. That Father Francis Xavier had not been named, but Father Bobadilla, and that they substituted another in Bobadilla's place because the departure was in haste, seems to have been a chance. And yet it was no chance, but by the high counsel of God, Who had determined to make him the apostle of those parts. Further, when they came to Portugal, seeing the great fruit that they produced here, there was an idea of detaining them; and finally it was determined that one of the two should stay there and the other go on to the Indies. You see here another turn of

affairs, going to make the issue contingent. But with God there is no contingency; in the end it had to be Father Francis Xavier who went to the Indies, for that was the will of God and so He had determined, since this it was that made for the good of those souls and for His glory. Let men plan as they like and carry it by the way they command; God will take this way as a means to accomplish His plans and do that which is most suitable for you and for His greater glory.

From these and other like examples, as well from Holy Scripture as from our daily witness and experience, as well in others as in ourselves, we must go on planting and imprinting in our heart this confidence by means of meditation and consideration; and we must not stop in this exercise until we feel in our heart a very familiar and filial confidence in God. And take it for certain that the greater the confidence with which you throw yourself upon God, the safer will you be; and on the other hand, until you come to have this filial confidence, you will never enjoy true peace and repose of heart, for without it all things will trouble and alarm you. Let us, then, once for all throw ourselves and cast ourselves altogether into the hands of God and trust in Him as the Apostle St. Peter advises: *Throw all your solicitude upon God, because He hath care of you* (I Pet. v. 7); and the prophet: *Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he will nourish thee* (Psalm liv. 23). Thou, O Lord, hast loved me so much that for me Thou didst deliver Thyself over entirely into the hands of cruel executioners: *and Jesus he delivered over to their will* (Luke xxiii. 25). Is it much that I should place and deliver over my whole self into hands that are not cruel, but so compassionate as Thine, that Thou mayest do with me what Thou wilt, since I am sure that it will not be for anything else than what is better and more appropriate for me?

Let us accept that division and agreement which Christ our Redeemer made with St. Catherine of Siena. The Lord

did many comforting favors to this saint, and among them one in particular. He appeared to her one day and said: "Daughter, forget thyself to remember Me; and I will think of thee and take care of thee"—*Cogita tu de me, et ego cogitabo continenter de te*. Oh, what a good agreement and what a good exchange! What a great gain this would be for our souls! Now the Lord is ready to come to this agreement with each one of us: forget yourself and give over scheming; and the more you forget yourself to remember and trust in God, the greater care will God take of you. Who, then, will not accept this division, so advantageous and so consoling, being that which the spouse says she had made with her Beloved: *I to my Beloved, and he in turn commits himself to me* (Cant. vii. 10). And elsewhere: *My beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16).

CHAPTER XII

How Profitable and Perfect a Thing It Would Be to Apply Meditation to This Exercise of Conformity to the Will of God; and How We Should Descend to Particulars Until We Reach the Third Degree of Conformity

JOHAN RUYSBROECK, a most learned and spiritual man, relates of a holy virgin that, giving an account of her prayer to her confessor and spiritual father, who must have been a great servant of God and far advanced in prayer, and seeking direction from him, she told him that her exercise in prayer was on the life and Passion of Christ our Redeemer, and that what she drew from thence was a knowledge of herself and of her vices and passions, and grief and compassion for the pains and afflictions of Christ. The confessor said that that was good, but that without much virtue one could elicit a sentiment of tender compassion for the Passion of Christ, as here on earth for mere love and natural affection for a friend one may elicit com-

passion for his afflictions. The virgin asked: "Would it be a true devotion for a person every day to bewail her sins?" He answered: "That is good too, but not the most excellent of all, since evil is a thing naturally to grieve over." She asked again: "Would it be true devotion to think of the pains of hell and the glory of the blessed?" He answered: "That is not the most sublime either, since Nature herself abhors and refuses what gives pain and loves and seeks after what may afford happiness and glory; thus, if they were to paint a town full of places of pleasure and recreation, Nature would desire it." Hereupon the holy virgin was much distressed and mournful for not knowing to what subject to apply her prayer, the better to please God. A little way from that she perceived a very beautiful child, to whom she told her distress and inconsolable situation. The child told her not to talk that way, because he himself could and would console her. "Go," he said, "to thy spiritual father and say to him that true devotion consists in abnegation and contempt of oneself and entire resignation into the hands of God, as well in adversity as in prosperity, uniting oneself firmly to God by love and conforming entirely one's own will to His will." She was much cheered and told this to her spiritual father, who replied: "There is the point, and to that should meditation be applied, since therein consists perfect charity and love of God, and consequently our advancement and perfection."

Of another holy woman it is told that she was taught by God, in reciting the Our Father to dwell much on these words, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. And of the holy virgin, Gertrude, it is related that, inspired by God, she once repeated three hundred and sixty-five times those words of Christ, *Not my will, but thine be done—Non quod ego volo, sed quod tu* (Luke xxii. 42), and she understood that thereby she had greatly pleased God. Let us, then, imitate these examples and apply thereto our meditation and dwell much on this exercise.

That we may be able to do this better and to greater advantages, it is necessary to observe and presuppose two things. The first is that the need of this exercise is principally for the time of adversities, when difficulties come in our way, and things trying to our flesh. It is for these occasions that virtue is most necessary, and then is better seen the love that each one has for God. As in time of peace the king shows his good will to his soldiers by the bounties that he bestows on them, and they in time of war show the love and regard they have for him by fighting and dying in his cause; so in time of consolation and favor the King of heaven gives us marks of the good will He bears us, and we in tribulation show our devotedness to Him more than in the time of prosperity and consolation. Father Master Avila well says that to give thanks to God in time of consolation is the part of all; but to give thanks in time of tribulations and adversities is proper to the good and the perfect; and so it is a music that sounds very sweet and pleasant in the ears of God. Better is one "Thanks be to God!" he says, in adversities than "Blessed be God!" a thousand times repeated in time of prosperity. And so Holy Writ compares the just man to a certain precious stone of deep red color like a ruby, and of great brilliance: *gemma carbunculi in ornamento auri* (Ecclus. xxxii 7); for, as this stone shines brighter in the night than in the day, so the just man and true servant of God is more brilliant and shows better what he is in tribulations and troubles than in prosperity. This is what Holy Writ praises so much in holy Toby, for that when the Lord permitted that after so many troubles he should also lose his eyesight, he did not on that account fall into any sullen discontent with God nor abate one jot of the fidelity and obedience that he paid Him before, but stood his ground unflinchingly, rendering thanks to God all the days of his life, as well for his blindness as for his eyesight, as also did holy Job in his troubles (Tob. ii. 14; Job i. 21). This, says St.

Augustine, is what we should endeavor to imitate, being the same in adversity as in prosperity and remaining as cheerful and unruffled. As the hand is the same when you close your fist as when you hold your fingers open, so the servant of God in the interior of his soul ought to remain the same, although on the exterior and outside he seems oppressed and pained. So they say of Socrates that no one ever saw him unusually joyful or unusually sad; throughout so many varying phases of fortune he remained always equable even to the end of his life. Will it be too much for us, Christians and religious, to arrive at a perfection which this gentile attained?

The second thing necessary to observe is that it is not enough for us to have in general this conformity to the will of God, for what is in general is easy. Who is there that will not say that he wishes the will of God to be accomplished in him in all things? Bad and good, all say every day in the Pater Noster: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. More is necessary than that; it is necessary to break the matter up, descending in particular to those things which seem capable of giving us some pain if they were to occur. And we must not stop until we overcome and smooth down all these difficulties, so that there shall not remain, as they say, so much as a spearman standing; finally, until there is nothing left to stand in the way of our union and conformity in all things to the will of God, but we can face any obstacle that may offer.

We must not rest content with this, but aim at passing on and not stopping until we find in ourselves a disposition to give a hearty, glad, and joyous welcome to the accomplishment of God's will in us, even though it be with troubles, pains, and affronts; and this is the third degree of conformity. But even in this there are different degrees, one above another, which may be reduced to three principal degrees in the way in which the saints speak of the virtue of patience. The first is when on the occurrence of painful

events the man does not desire them nor love them, but rather shuns them; still he would rather suffer them than commit any sin to avoid them. This is the lowest degree and is matter of precept. Thus, though the man feels pain, grief, and sadness at the evils that befall him, and though the sick person groans and cries out at the vehemence of his pains, and though the bereaved survivor weeps over the death of the members of his family, yet for all that he holds steadily to his conformity with the will of God.

The second degree is when, though the man does not desire the evils that befall him nor choose them, still, when they come, he accepts them and suffers with a good grace because such is the will and good pleasure of God. What this degree adds to the first is a certain good will and a certain love of the pain for God's sake and a desire to suffer it, not only so long as there is an obligation under precept to suffer it, but further so long as the suffering of it will be agreeable to God. The first degree takes things with patience; the second, beyond that, takes them with promptitude and readiness.

The third degree is when the servant of God, for the great love that he bears to the Lord, not only suffers and accepts with a good grace the pains and afflictions that are sent him, but desires them and rejoices much in them, such being the will of God, as St. Luke says of the apostles when they had been scourged and exposed to public infamy: *They went away rejoicing from the sight of the council, because they had been counted worthy to suffer ignominy for the name of Jesus* (Acts v. 41). And St. Paul: *I am filled with consolation, I superabound in joy in all our tribulation* (II Cor. vii. 4). And again, writing to the Hebrews, he praises them: *Ye have undergone with joy the plundering of your goods, knowing that ye have a better and abiding estate* (Heb. x. 34). This is what we should aim at coming to with the grace of the Lord, that we should bear with joy

and gladness all the tribulations and adversities that befall us, as St. James tells us in his canonical epistle: *Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into various trials* (James i. 2). The will and good pleasure of God should be to us a thing so pleasant and sweet, that with this sauce we are able to sweeten all the bitterness that comes upon us; all the troubles and disappointments of life become to us sweet and savory, such being the will and good pleasure of God. And this is what St. Gregory says: "When a soul is strongly bent on God, whatever bitterness she meets with in this life she counts for sweetness; all affliction she reckons to be rest; she desires to die in order to have a fuller enjoyment of life."

St. Catherine of Siena, in a dialogue which she wrote on the consummation of Christian perfection, says that among other things which her sweet Spouse Jesus Christ taught her there was this, that everyone should make to himself a sort of chamber, arched over with a strong arch, which is the divine will, and shut himself up; and stay there perpetually and never stir from thence so much as eye or foot or hand, but be ever sheltered therein like the bee when she is in her hive or the pearl in its shell. Though at the beginning, perhaps, this chamber may appear strait and narrow, she would afterwards find it ample and spacious, and without going out of it would pass to the *everlasting dwellings* (Luke xvi. 12), and would gain in a short time what without it she could not have gained in a long period. Let us, then, do this and let it be our continual exercise. *My beloved to me, and I to him* (Cant. ii. 16). In these two phrases there is exercise for a whole lifetime, and so we should keep them ever in our mouth and in our heart.

CHAPTER XIII

*Of the Indifference and Conformity Which a Religious
Should Have for Being in Any Part of the World
Whither Obedience May Send Him*

THAT we may make better profit of this exercise of conformity to the will of God and put in practice what we have said, we will go on to specify some chief things in which we should exercise it. Then we will descend to other general matters which concern all. At present we will begin with some particulars that there are in our Constitutions, since it is right that a religious should show his virtue and religious spirit chiefly in these; and each one may apply the doctrine to other things which there are in his religious order and state of life.

In the seventh part of our Constitutions our Father, speaking of missions, which is one of the principal undertakings of our institute, says that those of the Society must be indifferent to going and residing in any part of the world where obedience sends them, whether among believers or unbelievers, to the Indies or among heretics. And of this the professed make a fourth solemn vow of special obedience to the sovereign pontiff, that they will go readily and generously, without any excuse, to any part of the world whither His Holiness shall send them, without asking for any temporal thing whether for themselves or for another person, whether for the expenses of their journey or for their sustenance there; but that they will go on foot or on horseback, with money or without money, begging alms, as His Holiness shall think best. And our Father says that the end and intention of this vow was to make sure of doing the will of God. For as those first Fathers of the Society were of different provinces and kingdoms, and did not know in what quarters of the world they would best please God, whether among believers or unbelievers, to make sure of the will of God they made this vow

to the vicar of Christ, that he might distribute them for this world where he judged it would be best for the greater glory of God. But in the Society, he says, a man ought nowise to meddle or contrive to be in or go to one place rather than another, but should be quite indifferent, leaving the disposition of himself freely and entirely in the hands of his superior, who in God's place will guide him to what shall be for His greater service and glory.

That we may see how indifferent and ready our Father wishes us to be to go to any part of the world to which obedience shall send us, we read in his Life that one time Father James Laynez said to him that he had a desire to go to the Indies, to work for the salvation of those blind heathens, who seemed in peril for want of evangelical laborers. Our Father answered: "I desire nothing of the sort." Being asked his reason he said: "Because we, having made a vow of obedience to the sovereign pontiff, that at his will he may send us to any part of the world on the Lord's service, ought to be indifferent in such a way as not to be inclined to one part rather than to another. Rather," he said, "if I saw myself inclined as you to go to the Indies, I would endeavor to incline myself to the contrary, so to hold hard by that even balance and indifference which is necessary to attain to the perfection of obedience."

We do not mean hereby to say that these desires of the Indies are bad or imperfect, for doubtless they are very good and holy, and also it is well to propose them and lay them before the superior when our Lord gives them. So our Father says there: "Let superiors rejoice that their subjects lay before them these desires, for they are generally a sign that God calls them that way, and so things are done with sweetness." But what we say is this, that it may be seen what indifference and promptitude our Father wishes us to have to go and be in any part of the world, since he would not have us affectioned even to a thing so laborious and so much for the service of the Lord, that this

particular affection and desire may be no let or hindrance to stand in the way of that indifference and readiness in which we ought to be for any other thing and any other part of the world whither obedience may choose to send us.

Hence there follow sundry corollaries which will help to the better understanding of this point. The first is that, if those desires of the Indies were to make a man lose any of that indifference and readiness for other things which obedience might order, they would not be good but imperfect desires. If I find such a keenness of desire to go to the Indies or to any other place as to upset me and be the cause of my not being contented here or in any other place where obedience would have me be, or of my not taking the present duties that occupy me here and now with such hearty good will and diligence as before, because I have set my eyes and my heart on something else, that is a clear sign that those desires cannot be good or of God, since they hinder His will, and God cannot be contrary to Himself—especially since the desires and inspirations of the Holy Spirit do not usually bring with them restlessness and agitation of mind, but great peace and tranquillity; and this is one of the signs which the masters of spiritual life lay down to know whether inspirations and desires are of God or no.

The second corollary is that he who is in an all-round readiness, prompt and indifferent to go to any part of the world and to do anything that obedience shall ordain, even though he has no particular desires or inclination to go to the Indies or to other out-of-the-way places, such as others have, need not be distressed at that, for that does not make him be in any worse condition, but rather in a better. For this is the state of mind in which our Father wishes us all to be, so that on our part we should not desire or have any particular affection for this rather than for that, but that we should be rather as the needle of the balance,

not inclining one way rather than another. And of this mind are many and, I believe, most of us.

Our Father was once thinking of sending Father Master Nadal on a certain mission; and to do the thing more gently, he wished first to know how his inclination lay. Father Nadal answered in writing that he had no inclination or disinclination to anything. This our Father takes to be the best and most perfect attitude of mind, and with reason; for the other seems to be tied to one thing only, but this in its perfect indifference embraces all things that can possibly be commanded and is equally disposed and pledged to all; and as God sees the heart and will of every man and takes the will for the deed, it is before Him as if already all had been put into execution.

To bring our explanations to a close, I say that, if it is from cowardice and pusillanimity and want of mortification that one has not any of these desires of the Indies, not having pluck and courage to leave the conveniences which he has or thinks he might have here at home, or to suffer the great hardships that are to be endured out there, this would be imperfection and self-love. But take the case where it is not from cowardice or for lack of desires and courage to suffer these or greater hardships for the love of God and for the salvation of souls that a man has nothing of this desire, but because he does not know that that is the will of God or that God does not ask something else of him; but he on his part is so prompt and ready for this and for anything else that he comes to understand to be the will of God that, if they sent him to the Indies or to England* or to any other place whatever, he would go as willingly as if he had desired and asked for it—and even, perhaps, more willingly, as being better assured that he is not doing his own will in the matter, but purely the will of God—there is no doubt but that this is a much better and

*These words were written in 1610.

more perfect frame of mind. And it is men of this frame of mind and this indifference that superiors willingly send also to the Indies.

But, coming back to our principal point, our Father requires of us such indifference and resignation and readiness to be as willingly in one place as in another, in one province as in another, that not even the consideration of bodily health should divert us from this indifference. He says in the third part of the Constitutions that it is proper to our vocation and institute to go about from one part of the world to another and to be where there is greater hope of the service of God and greater aid of souls; yet, if it is found by experience that the climate of some country disagrees with somebody and he is seen to be continually ill there, then it is for the superior to consider the advisability of his going elsewhere where he may enjoy better health and employ himself to better effect in the service of God and of souls. But, he says, the invalid must not ask for this change nor show any inclination that way, but leave himself entirely to the care of the superior. These are his words: *Non tamen erit ipsius infirmi mutationem postulare, nec animi propensionem ad eam ostendere, sed superioris curae id relinquetur*. Our Father here is asking not a little but much of us; for a man must be very indifferent and mortified not only not to ask for, but even not to show any inclination for, a change when his health is going continually from bad to worse.

Thus in what regards going to the Indies or to the countries of heretics a man may well represent his inclination and desire, as we have said, albeit with indifference and resignation; but in this case our Father does not give leave either to ask for a change or to show an inclination and desire thereof, which is much more. The only permission he gives is that, if a man finds himself ill, he should represent to the superior his illness and the indisposition and incapacity which he feels for the work of the ministry, and

of that we have a rule that we should represent it. But, once the representation is made, the subject has nothing further to do; the superior will see whether on this supposition it will be better to send him to some other place where he may have better health and do more or whether it would be more to the glory of God that he should stay there where he is, doing less or even doing nothing. However, it is not for the subject to judge; let everyone abandon himself to the guidance of the superior, who governs him in place of God, and take that for better and more for the divine service which he shall ordain. How many are there in these lands, and in others more contrary to their health, to earn their bread there! How many cross the sea and go to the Indies, to Rome, and to Constantinople, for a little property, and risk not only their health but their life! It will not, then, be much for us, being religious, to do for God what people in the world do for money. And, though it occurs to you that elsewhere you might do something or even much, while here where you are, you are so ill that you can do nothing, remember that, all the same, it is better to be here where you are by the will of God doing nothing than to be at the head of things anywhere else, doing your own will, although you did much. Conform yourself to the will of God, Who requires this of you at present for a purpose that He knows and which it is not necessary for you to know.

In the chronicles of the order of St. Francis it is related of the holy brother Giles that, the blessed St. Francis having licensed him to go where he would and live in any province and house that was most to his taste, leaving that to his choice for the greatness of his virtue and holiness, he had scarcely passed four days in the enjoyment of this license when he found his former tranquillity and rest of mind impaired and became a prey to anxiety and trouble. So he went to St. Francis, begging him with much earnestness to designate the place and house where he was to live,

and not leave it to his choice, declaring that in that free and large obedience he could find no peace or rest. Good religious do not find peace and contentment in the fulfilment of their own will and do not hanker after this house and place or that; all they wish is that obedience should lead them by the hand and place them where it wills, because they take that to be the will of God, in which alone they find rest and contentment.

CHAPTER XIV

*Of the Indifference and Conformity to the Will of God
Which a Religious Should Have for Any Office and
Occupation in Which Obedience May Place Him*

THE indifference and resignation of which we have been speaking ought to be shown also in point of any office or occupation in which obedience shall choose to place us. We see well how many and how various are the offices and occupations that there are in religion; let everyone, then, run his mind through them until he finds that he is equally ready to face any of them. Our Father says in his Constitutions, and we have it in the Rules: "In the exercise of lowly and humble offices, each one should take up those more willingly which are more repugnant to sense, if he be ordered to make that his occupation." Indifference and resignation are more necessary toward lowly and humble offices, because of the repugnance that nature has for them; and so one does more and shows more virtue and perfection in offering himself to God for these offices than in offering himself for others more elevated and honorable. If one so much desired to serve a great lord as to offer himself to serve him all his life long as a running footman and dustman, if needful, it is clear that such a one does more and shows more good will to serve than if he said: "My lord, I will serve you as butler or major-domo;" that would

rather be a bid for a salary than an offer of service. And this offer would be all the more considerable, the better parts he had for high offices who offers himself for lowly ones. In the same way, then, if you offer yourself to God, saying: "Lord, I will serve Thee in the office of preacher, or lecturer in theology," you do not do much in that, because high and honorable offices are in themselves desirable; you have little scope for showing in them the desire that you have of serving God. But when you offer yourself to serve in the house of God all the days of your life in lowly and humble offices, offices repugnant to your natural feelings and sensuality, then do you much more show the desire you have of serving God. This is a far more appreciable and valuable service, and all the more so, the better parts you have for higher offices. This should be enough to make us desire lowly and humble offices and to be always more inclined to them, especially since in the house of God no office is low. They even say this on earth of the house of a king, because to serve the king in any office whatsoever is made great account of; how much more will it be to serve God, to serve Whom is to reign.

St. Basil, to give us an affection for lowly and humble offices, quotes the example of Christ, of Whom we read in the holy Gospel that He occupied Himself in such offices, washing the feet of His disciples; and not only that, but serving for a long time His most holy Mother and St. Joseph and being subject and obedient to them in all that they commanded. *And he was subject to them* (Luke ii. 51). From the age of twelve to thirty the holy Gospel tells us nothing of Him but this; whereon the saints well reflect that He must have served and helped them in many lowly offices, especially seeing that they were such poor people as they were. "Let not, then, the Christian"—and much less the religious—"disdain to do what Christ did," says St. Augustine. Since the Son of God did not disdain to busy Himself in these lowly offices for love of us, let us not dis-

dain either to busy ourselves in them either for His love, although it be for all the days of our life.

But, coming more to our point, one of the chief reasons and motives there are to make us take up with hearty good will any office and occupation that obedience may put upon us, should be our being convinced that such is the will of God; for, as we said above, this should be always our consolation and satisfaction in all our occupations, that we are therein doing the will of God. It is this that sates and satisfies the soul: "God wills that I should be doing this now;" "This is the will of God;" "There is nothing more to desire, since there is nothing better or higher than the will of God." Such as live in this way do not care whether they are ordered this or that, or put in a high or low office, since it is all one to them.

The blessed St. Jerome relates an example very pat to this purpose. He says that, in visiting those holy monks of the desert, he saw one of whom the superior, desirous of his spiritual advancement and also to give an example of obedience to the rest of the youthful community, had ordered to drag up hill twice a day a very large stone for the space of three miles, that is, a league, there being no other necessity for it, nor utility either, except for him to obey and mortify his judgment, and he had been at it for eight years. And as this, says St. Jerome, to those who do not understand this virtue of obedience, nor have attained to the purity and simplicity thereof in their spirit of haughtiness and pride, might possibly appear a childish game or an idle act, they asked him how he bore that obedience. And I myself, says St. Jerome, asked the same question, being desirous to know what movements passed in his soul while he was doing this. The monk replied: "I am as full of content and joy when I have done this as if I had done the highest and most important thing that they could have commanded me." St. Jerome says that this reply made such an impression on him that from that date he

began to live like a monk. This it is to be a monk and to live like a true religious, not to stop at the exterior work, but to consider that we are fulfilling the will and good pleasure of God. These are they who advance and grow great in virtue and perfection, since the doing of the will of God is their continual nourishment, a nourishment like that of the finest wheaten flour. *Et adipe frumenti satiat te* (Psalm cxlvii. 14).

But someone will say: "I see well that it is great perfection to do the will of God in all things and that in any exercise they command me I can be doing the will of God; but I could wish them to occupy me in some bigger thing and let me do the will of God there." This is an error in first principles; it is, in plain English, wanting God to do your will. I have no mind to draw plans for God; I have no mind to ask that He should fall in with my views and with my likings; I am minded to follow the plans of God and fall in with what He wants of me. St. Augustine says very well: "He is Thy good servant, Lord, who makes no account of Thy command falling in with his will, but of his willing that which Thou commandest"—*Optimus minister tuus est, qui non magis intuetur hoc a te audire quod ipse voluerit, sed potius hoc velle quod a te audierit*. And the holy Abbot Nilus says: "Do not ask of God to do what you want done, but what Christ teaches us to ask for, that His will may be done in me."

Let note be taken of this point, which is very profitable and has a general application to all the hardships and contingencies that can befall us. It is not for us to choose in what and how we are to suffer, but for God. It is not for you to choose the temptations that you are to undergo, or to say: "If it were any other temptation, I should not mind; but this I can't stand." Our pains would not be pains if they were such as we ourselves chose. If you are in earnest in your wish to please God, you should ask Him to take you on the side that He knows best and

wishes to take you on, not on the side that you wish. And when the Lord sends you what is most disagreeable to you and what you have the greatest reluctance to suffer, and you fall in with and adapt yourself to that, then you will be a better imitator of Christ our Redeemer, Who said: *Not my will, but thine be done* (Luke xxii. 42). This it is to have an entire conformity to the will of God, offering ourselves in all things to Him that He may do with us what He wills, and after what manner He wills, without exception or contradiction and without reserve of anything to ourselves.

Louis of Blois relates that the holy virgin Gertrude, moved by pity and compassion, prayed to God on behalf of a certain person, who she had heard was complaining impatiently that God was sending her sundry afflictions, infirmities, or temptations which seemed to her not suitable for her. But the Lord replied to the holy virgin: "Tell that person for whom you ask, that since the kingdom of heaven cannot be gained without some affliction and annoyance, she should choose what she thinks will be profitable to her and, when it comes, be patient." From these words and the tone in which the Lord said them, the holy virgin understood that it is a very dangerous kind of impatience, when a man wishes to choose what he has to suffer, saying that such and such things are not proper for his salvation and that he cannot bear what God sends him. Everyone should persuade himself and trust that what God our Lord sends him is what is proper for him, and so take it in patience, conforming therein his will to that of God. Now, as you are not to choose the afflictions and temptations that you are to suffer, but take as from the hand of God what He sends you and understand that that is what befits you best; so neither are you to choose the office and function which you are to discharge, but take as from the hand of God that in which obedience shall place you and understand that that is what suits you best.

They add here another point of high spirituality, and say that a man should be so resigned to the will of God and rest so securely in it as not to desire to know what God intends to do with him and how He will dispose of him. As here on earth, when a nobleman has such confidence in his steward as to know nothing of his property or of what he has in his house—which is a mark of great confidence, as holy Joseph says that his master behaved to him: *Lo, my lord hath handed over to me all things, and knoweth not what he hath in his house* (Gen. xxxix. 8)—so does a man show great confidence in God when he does not seek to know what God means to do with him. “I am in good hands, that is enough for me! *My destinies, O Lord, are in thy hands* (Psalm xxx. 16).” With this I live content and secure, and have no need to know more.

For those who desire posts and offices and ecclesiastical functions of the higher sort, thinking that in them they will gain greater fruit of souls and render greater service to God, I say that they are much mistaken in thinking that this is zeal for the greater service of God and the greater good of souls. No, it is not that; it is jealousy and desire of honor and reputation and of your own comforts. It is because this office and function is more honorable or more in accordance with their own taste and inclination that men desire it. That is clearly seen by this consideration. If you were out there in the world, or by yourself, with some show of reason you might have said: “This is better than that and productive of fruit in souls; I mean to leave this to do that, because one cannot do everything.” But here in religion you cannot leave this for that without someone or other having to take up and do what you leave. The only difficulty is that, if you take the alto part, the other man must take the bass. If I were humble, I should rather wish the other man to take the high office because I am apt to believe that he would do it better than I and with greater fruit and with less danger of vanity.

For this and for other like reasons, that is an excellent doctrine of our blessed Father Ignatius which he lays down as a foundation for the election of a state of life. He marks three degrees or modes of humility; and the third and most perfect is, in a choice of two alternatives, each equally making for the glory and service of God, to choose that in which there is most disparagement and abasement of myself, the better therein to resemble and imitate Christ our Redeemer and Lord, Who chose to be disparaged and abased for our sake. And there is therein this other great advantage, that in these things there is less of self-interest; the man has no opportunity for seeking himself therein and escapes the danger of growing vain over them which there is in high and honorable offices. In lowly offices, humility and charity are exercised together, and in them humility is well preserved, doing the acts that are proper to herself; but in those high offices charity is exercised to the risk of humility, and that should be enough to make us not only not desire such preferments, but even to dread them.

CHAPTER XV

Of the Conformity That We Should Have to the Will of God in the Distribution of Natural Gifts and Talents

EVERY individual should be quite content with what God has imparted to him in point of talent, intellect, and genius, and the ability and parts that God has given him, and not be pained or saddened at not having as much ability or talent as his neighbor, nor going for so much as he does. This is a thing that we all have need of; for although men may shine and stand in a more advantageous light in certain things, yet there are always other counterpoises to humble them, wherein they stand in need of this conformity. So it is necessary to be forearmed, since it is the way of the devil to assail many on this side. You are in

your studies and, seeing that a fellow-student of yours shows remarkable ability, arguing and answering right well in disputations, there may perhaps come over you some shadow of envy. It does not go so far as to make you sad at the good of your brother, which is properly the sin of envy; but, after all, seeing your companions strong in capacity and going ahead with their talents, while you hang back and cannot get on nor make head at all, you experience some sadness and melancholy and feel abashed and out of countenance in company, and thence there comes over you a feeling of drooping and discouragement and a temptation to abandon your studies and sometimes even religious life. This temptation against vocation has taken hold of some because they were not well grounded in humility. There was one who thought to be a star, conspicuous among all, and that his fame would go out all over the province, of which he was the best student in the course; and, when his dream turned out quite the other way, he became quite abashed and crestfallen: whereupon the devil, seeing such an excellent opportunity, represented to him that he could never recover from this disgrace and disappointment otherwise than by leaving his order. And this is no new temptation, but a very old one.

In the chronicles of the order of St. Dominic there is related an example to this purpose of Albertus Magnus, who was master of St. Thomas Aquinas. Albertus Magnus, when a child, was very devout to our lady, reciting daily certain devotions in her honor, and by her means and intercession entered the order of St. Dominic at the age of sixteen. They say in the chronicles that as a youth he had not much understanding, but was untrained and of little capacity for study; and, seeing his fellow students to be of great and very subtle intellects, he quite lost heart. Thereupon temptation came to press him hard and throw him into danger, so much so that he was on the point of quitting the habit. In this hard press of conflicting thoughts

he was succored by a marvelous vision. Sleeping one night, he fancied that he was setting a ladder to the wall of the monastery to get out and leave the place; and, as he was mounting it, he saw on the top four venerable matrons, one of whom seemed to be mistress of the others. When he came near them, one of them laid hold of him and threw him from the ladder, forbidding his going out from the monastery. He persisted in trying to mount a second time, and the second matron behaved to him as the first had done. He wanted to mount a third time, and the third matron asked him the reason why he wanted to leave the monastery. With a blush on his face he replied: "I am going, my lady, because I see others of my class improving in the study of philosophy, while I labor in vain. The shame I suffer on that account is making me leave the order." The matron said to him: "This lady whom you see"—pointing to the fourth—"is the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven whose servants we three are; commend yourself to her; and we will help you and we will entreat her to be your intercessor with her most blessed Son to give you a docile mind that you may make progress in that study." Hearing this, Fra Albert rejoiced much, and the matron taking him to our Lady, he was well received by her, and she asked him what it was that he desired and asked. He answered: "To know philosophy, which I am studying, and do not understand." The Queen of Heaven answered: "Be of good heart and go on studying, for thou shalt be a great man in this faculty. But that thou mayest know," she went on to say, "that this comest to thee from me and not from thy own genius and ability, some days before thy death, while lecturing publicly, thou shalt forget all that thou knowest." With this vision he remained comforted. And from that time he improved much in the study, not only of philosophy, but also of theology and Holy Scripture, as the works that he has left behind him in writing testify. But three years before his death, while he was lecturing at Cologne, he lost

his memory entirely for all that concerned the sciences, as though for all his life he had never learned anything at study; and perhaps this was in penance for the little confidence he had had in the talent and ability that God had given him. And, remembering the vision that he had had when he tried to leave his vocation, he recounted publicly to his hearers all that had passed; and so took leave of them, shut himself up in his convent, and spent all his time in prayer and contemplation.

Now, that we may not come into the like dangers, we must needs be fortified beforehand. And the needful fortification for this purpose is great humility; for all this difficulty arises for want of that, because you cannot bear being reckoned the poorest scholar in the class. If they come to tell you that you are not fit to go on further in your studies, and you see your classmates turning into theologians and afterward graduates and preachers, there is need of much humility and much conformity to stand that. And the same will be necessary for the time after your studies, for temptation will occur to you at the thought: "I am not rated so high as the rest; I have not the talent to preach, shine, and speak in public like my neighbor, nor to have business entrusted to me and account taken of me." And I say the same of those who are not students. There will come to you thoughts and temptations: "Oh, that I were a student!" "Oh, that I were a priest!" "Oh, that I were a learned man to be able to gather fruit of souls!" And sometimes the temptation may press you so hard as to endanger your vocation, and even your salvation.

This is a general doctrine that each one may apply to himself according to his state. It is necessary that all be quite conformable to the will of God, each one content with the talent that God has given him and the state in which God has placed him, and that none should want to be more than God wants him to be. The blessed St. Augustine on

those words of the psalmist: *Incline my heart to keep thy commandments, and not to avarice* (Psalm cxviii. 36), says that this was the beginning and root of all our evil, that our first parents sought to be more than God had made them; for this they fell from the state that they enjoyed and lost what God had given them. The devil set for them this bait: *Ye shall be as Gods* (Gen. iii. 5); by that he deceived and ruined them. We inherit this inheritance from them, that we have a craving after Godhead and a madness and frenzy for seeking to be more than we are. And, as the devil succeeded so well herein with our first parents, he endeavors to make war on us also by this means, inciting us to desire to be more than God wishes us to be and not be content with the talent that He has given us nor with the state in which He has placed us. And on this account, St. Augustine says, the prophet asks of God: "Lord, give me a heart disinterested and inclined faithfully to follow Thy good pleasure and will, and not my own interests and conveniences." By "avarice" he says is to be there understood all manner of self-interest, and not the mere covetousness of money; and this is what St. Paul says is the root of all evils: *The root of all evils is covetousness* (I Tim. vi. 10).

But, that we may all have this disposition of indifference, conforming ourselves and contenting ourselves with the talent which the Lord has given us and with the state or degree in which He has placed us, it is enough to know that such is the will of God. *All these gifts are the working of one and the same Holy Spirit, distributing to each in particular according to his good pleasure*, says the Apostle St. Paul (I Cor. xii. 11). The Apostle puts here the metaphor, which we have applied above to another purpose, of the human body; and says that, as God has placed the members of the body, giving to each one as He chose, and the feet do not complain that they do not act as the head, nor the hands that they do not act as the eyes, so also in the

Church—and the same in the body of a religious order—God has given each one the post and office that it has pleased Him, and that not by chance, but by a particular resolution and providence of His own. If, then, God wishes you to be feet, it is not reasonable that you should wish to be head; and if God wishes you to be hands, it is not reasonable that you should wish to be eyes. Oh, how right high and right deep are the judgments of God! Who shall be able to comprehend them? *Who of men shall be able to know the counsels of God?* (Wisdom ix. 13). All things, Lord, proceed from Thee, and for that in all things be Thou praised. Thou knowest what it is fit to give to each; and why one has more, and others less, it is not for us to discern. Who knows what would have become of you if you had had great genius and ability? Who knows, if you had had a great talent for preaching and had been much listened to and thought a great deal of, but that that would have been your ruin, as it has been the ruin of others by their running into pride and vanity? “The learned,” says that holy man Æ Kempis, “love to be seen and made account of as such.” If with two penn’orth of genius that you have and three ha’porth of letters that you know, and with mediocrity and perhaps less than mediocrity of brains, you are so vain and arrogant that you value yourself, and compare and perhaps prefer yourself to others, and make it a grievance that they do not lay hands on you for this and that post, where would you be if you were really a first-rate man, a man of rare and extraordinary parts? Wings grow on the ant to its evil, and perhaps they would so grow on you.

Truly, if we had not goggles, but eyes, we should rather render infinite thanks to God for having put us in a lowly and humble position and for having given us but poor parts and abilities, and say with that holy man: “I take it for a great blessing, O Lord, not to have many things for which there could follow me in the world outside praise and honor

before men." The saints knew very well the great danger there is in these advantages and excellences, and they did not only not desire them, but dreaded them—*Ab altitudine diei timebo*—"I will dread the noonday light" (Psalm lv. 4)—for the great danger there is in them of vanity and perdition; and therefore they pleased God the more, Who would have His servants humble rather than great.

Oh, if we could once for all make up our minds that all is a mockery and a farce but doing the will of God! Oh, if we could finally place all our contentment in the contentment and satisfaction of God! If without learning, or with the smattering of learning and poor abilities that you have, you please God the more, why do you aspire after learning? Why want more learning, more ability, more talents? If you had any reason for wanting them, it would be to please and serve God the better therewith. But if God is more pleased with your having no learning or not getting any more learning, more talent, more ability—as He certainly is pleased, since it is He that has made this distribution—what have you to complain of? What reason have you to wish to be what God does not wish you to be and what it is not fitting that you should be? The great sacrifices that Saul wished to offer were not pleasing to God because they were not according to His will (I Kings xiii. 10; xv. 21); neither will those high and lofty desires of yours be pleasing to God. Our good and our advancement in perfection do not lie in our being learned, nor being preachers, nor in having great parts and talents, nor in understanding high and subtle things, but in doing the will of God and in giving a good account of what He has committed to us and employing well the talent that He has given us. On this we should fix our eyes and on nothing else, because it is this that God requires of us.

A very good comparison to explain this is that of the actors who represent comedies. Their credit and reward does not go by the personage that they represent, but by the

good rendering that each one gives of his part. If he who represents the clown does it better than he who represents the emperor, he comes out more appreciated and praised by the audience and better rewarded by the judges. In like manner, what God regards and sets store by in us in this life—which is all like a theatrical representation and a comedy, and God grant that it may not be a tragedy that is soon over!—is not the personage that we represent, one of superior, one of preacher, one of sacristan, one of porter—but the good rendering that each one gives of his part. Thus, if the lay brother does his office well and represents his character better than the preacher or superior does his, he will be held in greater credit with God and be better rewarded and honored. One perhaps that would not have succeeded in the character of the king, gains honor and carries the palm in the character of the page or the shepherd boy. So you also might possibly not have succeeded in playing the preacher or superior, and you may play well the part of the spiritual father or of the lay brother. God knows how to distribute the parts well and assign to each one the character that suits him, *to each one according to his capacity* (Matt. xxv. 15). According to the capability and strength of each, so did the master distribute his talents. Let none, then, desire to play another part or have another talent, but let each one make it his endeavor to play well the part assigned him, to lay out well the talent he has received and give a good account thereof; for in that way he will please God better and receive a greater reward.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Conformity That We Should Have to the Will of God in Times of Sickness

AS health is a gift of God, so also is sickness. God sends us sickness for our probation, amendment, and correction, and for many other good things and advantages that are apt to flow from it—as knowledge of our own weakness; dissipation of the illusions of our vanity; detachment from the things of earth and the appetites of sensuality; abatement of the impetuosity and strength of our greatest enemy, the flesh; a reminder that this is not our native city, but a sort of inn where we are in exile; and other like things. Wherefore the Wise Man says: *A grave illness maketh the soul temperate and strong* (Ecclus. xxxi. 2). Thus we ought to be as conformable to the will of God in sickness as in health, taking it as coming from the hand of God our Lord when He is pleased to send it. One of those ancient Fathers said to a disciple of his that was sick: "Son, grieve not over thy sickness, but rather render great thanks to God for it; for, if thou art iron, the fire will consume thy rust; and if thou art gold, thou wilt be proved in the fire. It is a great virtue and a great act of religion to render thanks to God in sickness."

Of the blessed St. Clare, Surius relates in her Life that for twenty-eight years she was ill of grievous infirmities, and her patience was so great that in all that time they never noticed her complaining or murmuring at her great affliction, but rather she was continually giving thanks to the Lord. And in her last sickness, when she was so worn out that for seventeen days she was not able to eat a morsel, and her confessor Friar Reginald was consoling her and exhorting her to patience in such a long martyrdom, she answered: "From the time that I came to know the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ through His holy servant

Francis, no sickness has been hard to me, no pain troublesome, and no penance severe." Admirable also in this way and a very rare example, which should give much courage and consolation to the sick, is the life of St. Lidwina, virgin. For thirty-eight years she endured continual and most severe infirmities and pains; and for thirty years she was unable to rise from her poor bed or put her foot on the ground, and there the Lord did her very great favors.

But because certain particular reasons are apt to occur to us to hinder this indifference and conformity under color and appearance of greater good, we will proceed to reply to them and meet them. In the first place, one may say: "For myself I should not mind being sick any more than being in health, but what I do feel is seeming to be a burden to the order and giving trouble in the house." To this I say that this is a rash judgment on superiors and on the community, condemning them of want of charity and want of conformity to the will of God. Your superiors also profess to aim at perfection and to take all things as coming from the hand of the Lord and to conform themselves therein to the divine will; and thus, if God wishes you to be sick and them to be busy waiting on you and comforting you, they also must wish the same; and as you bear the cross which God gives you, they also will take up with great conformity that which He wishes them to bear.

But you will say: "Herein I quite see the great charity that is practised in the Society; the only thing that troubles me is the good that I might be doing in studying, preaching, and hearing confessions, and the lapse of that through my being sick." To this St. Augustine answers very well. He says that we should consider that we do not know whether it will be better to put into execution what we have a mind to or leave it undone; and so we are forced to plan and arrange things according to our capacity; and if afterwards we are able to carry them out as we had planned, we should not rejoice because that has been done

which we thought of and desired, but because the Lord has been pleased to have it done so. And if what we thought and planned has not eventually been carried into effect, not on that account should we be troubled and lose our peace. "It is fairer," St. Augustine says, "that we should follow His will than that He should follow ours"—*Aequius est ut nos eius quam ut ille nostram sequatur voluntatem*. And he concludes with an admirable sentence: "He is better at laying out and planning things who is disposed and prepared not to do what God would not have him do, than he who is all anxiety and desire to carry into act what he has thought of"—*Nemo melius ordinat quod agat, nisi qui paratior est non agere quod divina potestate prohibetur quam cupidior agere quod humana cogitatione meditatur*.

In this manner, then, and with this indifference we should plan and arrange what we have to do, being ever quite prepared to conform ourselves to the will of God if so it happens that our plans come not to effect. Thus we shall not be troubled or saddened when through sickness or any other like cause we have not been able to do what we intended and had ready planned out, even though the things intended were in themselves of great benefit to souls. Father Master Avila says very well, writing to a sick priest: "Do not reckon up what you would have done if you had been well, but how much you will please the Lord by acquiescing in being ill. If you seek, as I believe you do seek, purely the will of God, why should you mind being ill rather than well, since His will is all our good?"

St. Chrysostom says that holy Job merited and pleased God more in that saying: *As it hath pleased the Lord, so hath it been done: may the name of the Lord be blessed* (Job i. 21), conforming his will to those afflictions and leprosy that God sent him, than by any amount of alms-deeds and benefactions that he did while he was healthy and rich. In like manner you will please God more by conforming yourself to His will in your sickness than by all

that you could have done in health. St. Bonaventure says the same: "There is more perfection in bearing with patience and conformity afflictions and adversities than in being hard at work on excellent good works"—*Perfectius est adversa tolerare patienter quam bonis operibus insudare*. For God has no need of me nor of you to do the good that He wants done in His Church. *I have said to the Lord, Thou art my God, Thou hast no need of my good deeds* (Psalm xv. 2). For the present He wishes to preach to you with this sickness, that you may learn to practise patience and humility; let God act, for He knows what is better, and you don't. If we had any reason for desiring health and strength, it would be to employ them in serving and pleasing God more; but if the Lord is pleased rather and takes it better that I should be occupied in being ill and in bearing with patience the troubles of sickness, His will be done, for that is what is better and more suitable for me. The Apostle St. Paul, preacher to the Gentiles, was left by the Lord in prison two years (Acts xxiv. 27) just at the time that he was so necessary to the primitive Church. There is not much done for you to complain of, if God keeps you in the prison of sickness two months, two years, even your whole life, if He pleases. You are not so necessary in the Church of God as was St. Paul.

To some it is apt to be a difficulty, when they have long and protracted illnesses and indispositions, not to be able to follow the community and to have to be singular in many things, and they are disconsolate over this, thinking that they are not as much religious as the rest, or at least that others may be disedified seeing their singularities and comforts; especially since sometimes the sickness and necessity they are in is not so apparent in the exterior, but only God and the sick man know what he suffers, whereas these singularities and exemptions strike the eye. To this I say that it is a good consideration and a very just sentiment, and he who feels it is to be praised; still he must not give

up conformity to the will of God in his infirmity, but double his merit. This is done, on the one hand, by your conforming yourself entirely to the will of God in all your indispositions and ailments, since He wishes you to suffer them; and, on the other, by having a great desire, so far as it rests with you, to follow all the exercises of religion with much punctuality and exactness and feeling in your heart regret at not being able to do what the others do. In this way, besides the merit that you gain by bearing your sickness with patience and conformity, you may merit also under the second head as much as the rest, who are in sound health and fulfil all the exercises.

St. Augustine in his sixty-second sermon *de Tempore*, treating of the obligation that all have to fast at that time under pain of mortal sin, and coming to deal with the case of the invalid who cannot fast, says that for him it is sufficient that he cannot fast, but eats with grief of heart, groaning and sighing because he cannot fast while others are fasting. As the valiant soldier who is brought into camp wounded, feels more his inability to fight any longer or to signalize himself in the service of his king than the pain of his wounds and the rigorous treatment he is put under; so it is proper for good religious, when they are on the sick list, to feel more their inability to go with the community and do the exercises of religion than they feel the sickness itself. Still, after all, neither this nor anything else should rob us of our conformity to the will of God in our sickness, but we should accept it as sent by His hand for His greater glory and our greater good and profit.

The blessed St. Jerome tells how a monk once asked the holy Abbot John the Egyptian to heal him of a sickness and high fever that he had, and the saint replied: "You seek riddance of a thing that is very necessary for you; for, as the uncleanness and filth of bodily things is taken away by soap or strong lye and the like, so souls are purified by sickness and afflictions."

CHAPTER XVII

*That We Ought Not to Put Our Trust in Doctors or Drugs,
but in God; and Conform Ourselves to His Will Not
Only in the Sickness Itself, but in All the
Incidents of the Same*

WHAT has been said of sickness is to be said also of all other things that are apt to occur in time of sickness. St. Basil gives a very good lesson for us when we are sick. He says that in availing ourselves of medical men and medical appliances we should not put all our trust in them. Thereof Holy Scripture makes it a fault in King Asa: *And in his sickness he sought not the Lord, but trusted rather in the skill of the doctor* (II Chron. xvi. 12). We must not attribute to this the whole cause of our getting better or not getting better, but we must put all our trust in God, Who is pleased sometimes to give us health through these medical appliances and sometimes not. And so, when physician and physic alike fail us, St. Basil says that we should not despair of our case on that account either. We read in the holy Gospel that Christ our Redeemer sometimes healed people by His mere will, as, dealing with that leper who petitioned Him: *Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean*, He answered: *I will, be thou made clean* (Matt. viii. 2-3). At other times He used some application, as when He made clay with spittle and anointed the eyes of the blind man and told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloe (John ix. 6). At other times He left the sick in their sicknesses and would not heal them, although they had spent all their substance on doctors and drugs (Mark v. 26; Luke viii. 43). So now also at times God heals without physicians or physic by His only will; at other times, by means of these medical appliances; at other times, though the patient consults many doctors, and they apply to him great remedies, God will not give health, that so we may

learn to put our trust not in human remedies, but in God. As King Ezechias did not attribute his cure to the plaster of figs that Isaias put on his wound, but to God (IV Kings xx. 7-8), so, when you recover from your illness, you must not attribute your cure to doctors or drugs, but to God, *who healeth all our infirmities* (Psalm cii. 3). *For it is not herb or plaster, but thy word, O Lord, that healeth all* (Wisdom xvi. 12). And when you are not cured, neither then either must you complain of doctors and medicines, but in that case also you must attribute all to God, Who does not wish to restore you to health, but that you should remain ill.

In the same way, when the physician has not understood the illness and has erred in the treatment of it—which is a thing that happens often enough even with great doctors and in the case of great personages—you must take that error as a stroke of Providence, as also any neglect or fault which the infirmarian may commit in the care of you. And you must not say that the fever returned because they made such and such a mistake in your treatment, but take it all as coming from the hand of God and say: “It has pleased the Lord that my fever has increased and that such an accident has befallen me;” because it is certain that, though on the part of those who are looking after you there has been a mistake, yet on the part of God it has not been without a set aim and purpose, since on the part of God nothing happens by chance. Think you that the flight of the swallows and their blinding holy Toby with their dung was by chance? It was not without a high decree and a particular will of God, to leave us an example in his person as in that of holy Job. And this the Holy Scripture says: *The Lord permitted that this trial should come upon him, to give to posterity an example of patience as in holy Job* (Tob. ii. 12). And the angel of the Lord said afterwards: *Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was needful that temptation should prove thee* (Tob. xii. 13). To prove thee, God permitted this temptation.

In the lives of the Fathers it is related of the Abbot Stephen that once, when he was sick, his companion was fain to make him a little cake; and, thinking that he was making it with good oil, he made it with linseed oil, which is very bitter, and gave it him. Stephen, as he noticed it, ate a little and said nothing. Another time he made him another in the same way; and, when he had tasted it and had no mind to go on eating, the brother said to him: "Eat, father, it is very good." And he made trial of it to incite him to eat it; and when he felt the bitterness, he began to fret and cry out: "I'm a murderer." And Stephen said to him: "Do not fret, son; for, if God had willed that you should not make a mistake in taking one oil for another, this would not have happened." And of many other holy men we read that they took with great conformity and patience the remedies given them, though they were contrary to what their illness required. So in this manner we ought to take all the mistakes and negligences, as well of the doctor as of the nurses, without complaining of the one, or throwing the fault on the other.

This is a thing in which a man's virtue is revealed and well shown. Great is the edification that a sick religious gives who takes all that is offered him with equanimity and cheerfulness as coming from the hand of God, and lets himself be guided and governed by superiors and infirmarians, forgetting himself and casting off all care of himself. St. Basil says: "You have entrusted your soul to the superior; why not entrust your body also? You have put in his hands your eternal salvation; why not also your temporal well-being?" And since the rule permits us then wholly to give up the care of our body and bids us do so, we should greatly esteem and profit by so advantageous a permission. On the other hand, a sick religious gives great disedification when he takes much care of himself, and keeps a close reckoning what they are to give him and how they are to give it and whether they keep their appoint-

ments with him exactly; and if not, he is master of complaints and murmurs.

Cassian says very well that sickness is no obstacle to purity of heart if the sick man knows how to take it as he ought; but "beware," he says, "lest the ailment pass from the body to the soul." If a man behaves in that way and takes occasion of his sickness to do his own will and not be obedient and submissive, then the ailment will pass to the soul and make the superior more concerned about the malady of the soul than about that of the body. You must not cease to show yourself a religious for being ill, nor think that rules do not exist for a sick man and that you may concentrate all your care on your health and comfort and forget your spiritual advancement. "Let him that is sick," says our holy Father, "by showing great humility and patience take care to give no less edification in time of sickness than in time of perfect health." St. Chrysostom on those words of the prophet: *Lord, thou hast crowned us with the buckler of thy good will* (Psalm v. 13), shows how, as long as this life lasts, there is always a conflict, and that we must go armed for it. He says: "This applies alike to the sick and to the healthy; for in time of illness there is particular occasion for this conflict, when pains assail the soul on all sides, when fits of sadness beset it, when the devil is there, inciting us to impatient speech and unmeasured complaints." So then is the time to exercise and show virtue. So says Seneca that the brave man must practise his fortitude as well in his bed, suffering illnesses, as on the field of battle, fighting against the enemy, since the chief part of fortitude is to endure rather than to accomplish. And the Wise Man: *Better is a patient than a strong man; and better is he who is master of his own soul than he who taketh cities by storm* (Prov. xvi. 32).

CHAPTER XVIII

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

WE read of the holy virgin Gertrude that one day Christ our Redeemer appeared to her, carrying in His right hand health and in His left hand sickness, and told her to choose which she wouldst. She answered: "What I desire, Lord, with all my heart is that Thou wilt not regard my will, but that that may be done in me which shall be for Thy greater glory and satisfaction."

It is told of a client of St. Thomas of Canterbury that in an illness he visited the tomb of the saint to beg him ask God to give him health. He obtained his petition, and went back home well. Then he began to think within himself that, if illness were better for his salvation, why should he seek for health? This reason struck him so forcibly that he went back to the tomb and asked the saint to beg of God to give him what was better for his salvation. God let the illness return, and he lived much consoled under it, understanding that that was what was better for him.

Surius in the Life of St. Vedastus, bishop, relates another like example of a blind man who, on the day of the translation of the body of that holy bishop, greatly desired to see his holy relics and consequently to have sight to see them. He obtained it of our Lord and saw what he desired. And, going about with sight, he turned to prayer that, if that sight did not make for the salvation of his soul, his blindness might return. After making that prayer he remained blind as before.

St. Jerome relates how, when St. Anthony, abbot, was summoned by St. Athanasius, bishop, to the city of Alexandria to help him in confuting and extirpating the heresies that were there, Didymus, who was a most learned man, but blind of the eyes of his body, discussed with St.

Anthony many passages of Holy Scripture in such a manner that the saint was in admiration of his genius and learning. After having discussed these passages, he asked him if he felt sad at being blind. He was loth to reply for shame. After being asked a second and a third time, he in the end openly confessed that he did feel sad thereat. Then the saint said to him: "It is a marvel to me how a man so wise as you can be sad and grieved at not possessing what flies and ants possess and the very earthworms, instead of rejoicing in the possession of what only saints and apostles have merited to obtain." Hence is seen, says St. Jerome, that it is a much greater thing to have spiritual than bodily eyes.

In the history of the order of St. Dominic, Father Hernando del Castillo relates how St. Dominic, while he lived at Rome, used to visit an afflicted sick woman, cloistered and a great servant of God, who had taken up her lodging in a tower hard by the gate of St. John Lateran; and the good father used oftentime to hear her confession and administer to her to the most Holy Sacrament. The woman was called Bona, and her life so well answered to her name that God taught her, like a good woman, to preserve cheerfulness in trials and find repose in death. She suffered a most severe infirmity in her breasts, which were so eaten away by cancer and so full of worms as would have been for any other person an insufferable torment, but not for her, who suffered it with admirable patience and giving of thanks. St. Dominic loved her much, seeing her so suffering and so advanced in virtue. One day, after having confessed and communicated her, he desired to see that cruel and terrible wound, and gained his point, though with some difficulty. When Bona uncovered herself, and the saint saw the putrid mass of the cancer, swarming with worms, and her patience and cheerfulness, he was moved to compassion, but had a greater desire of her wounds than of the treasures of earth and begged her to give one of

those worms as a relic. That the servant of God would not do unless he promised to restore it; for she had come to that pitch of joy in seeing herself thus devoured alive that, if any of the worms fell on the ground, she took it back to restore it to its place. So on his word of honor she gave him one, which was well-grown and had a black head. Scarcely had the saint taken it into his hand when it turned into a most beautiful pearl, and the friars in admiration told their father not to return it; but the sick woman asked for her worm and bade them give her back her pearl. But in the act of being given back it returned to its original form of a worm, and the woman put it in her breasts where it had been engendered and grown. St. Dominic prayed for her, made the sign of the cross over her, and left her. But as he was going down the tower-stairs the woman's cancer-eaten breasts fell off from her, worms and all; and little by little the flesh grew in its place, and in a few days she was altogether cured, telling to all who came near her the marvels that God wrought through His servant.

In the same history it is related how, when Friar Reginald was in communication with St. Dominic about taking the habit of his order and had now made up his mind to do so, he took to his bed with a fever which the doctors thought mortal. Father St. Dominic took greatly to heart his recovery and made continual prayer to God our Lord for that intention; and the sick man also along with him called our Lady to his aid with great devotion and earnestness. While the two of them were at this prayer, the most holy Queen of Heaven, our Lady, came into Reginald's room, surrounded with a brightness and splendor quite heavenly and marvelous. She was accompanied by other two holy virgins, whom he took to be St. Cecily and St. Catherine, martyrs. They went up with their sovereign Lady to the sick man's bed. She, as Queen and Mother of Mercy, comforted him and said: "What wouldst thou have me to do for thee? I come to see what thou askest; tell

me, and it shall be given thee." Reginald was overpowered and dumfounded with so heavenly a vision and doubted what it became him to do or to say; but one of the saints who accompanied our Lady soon drew him out of this perplexity, saying: "Brother, do not ask for anything, but leave all in her hands, for she knows better what to give than thou what to ask." The sick man followed this counsel, so discreet and well-advised, and so answered the Virgin: "Lady, I ask for nothing; I have no will beyond thine; in it and in thy hands I place myself." The Blessed Virgin then reached out and took some oil which her attendants brought with them for this purpose, and anointed Reginald in the way that it is customary to give extreme unction. So great was the efficacy of the touch of those holy hands that suddenly he found himself well of the fever and as restored in bodily strength as if he had never been ill. And what is more, along with that sovereign favor there was conferred on him another still higher in virtue of the soul, for from that moment he never felt any sensual or impure motion in his person all the days of his life, at no time, no place, and in no occasion.

In "Ecclesiastical History" it is related that among the men who flourished at that time there was a very distinguished man named Benjamin, who had of God the gift of healing the sick without any medicine by the mere touch of his hands, and anointing them with a little oil and saying a prayer over them. Along with this grace of healing others, he himself suffered from dropsy in a very grievous form and became so swollen that he could not come out by the door of his cell without displacing the doorposts. So he remained inside for eight months until he died, sitting in a very large chair, where he cured many ailments, never complaining nor grieving that he could find no remedy for himself. And those who pitied him he consoled, saying: "Pray God for my soul and never mind about my body, for when it was well it served me to no good purpose."

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a monk named Barnaby, who on a journey ran a splinter into his foot, and would not have it removed for some days nor have the wound attended to, that he might have something to suffer for the love of God; and it is said that he used to say to those who visited him: "The more the outer man suffers and is mortified, the more the inner man is quickened and strengthened."

In the "Life of St. Pacomius," Surius tells of a monk named Zacheus, who, suffering from epilepsy, would not on that account abate the rigor of his customary abstinence, which consisted in living on bread and salt, nor again cease to repeat the prayers that the other monks were accustomed to say in health, attending matins and the other canonical hours. The rest of the time, in the intervals of prayer, he occupied in making mats, baskets, and ropes; and from the roughness of the esparto grass with which he wove them, his hands were so badly hurt that the blood ran from the cracks in the skin; this he did not to be idle. At night, before sleeping, his custom was to meditate on some passages of Holy Scripture; then he made the sign of the cross all over his body; that done, he retired to rest till the hour of matins, at which, as has been said, he arose and remained at psalmody and prayer until it was daylight. This was the division of his time that this holy invalid made, and these were his ordinary occupations. There happened to come at one time a monk to visit him. He, seeing his hands in such a pitiable state, told him to anoint them with oil and he would not feel such pains in the openings. Zacheus did so; and not only was the pain not mitigated, but it was much increased. He went afterwards to see St. Pacomius and told him what he had done. The saint said to him: "Did you think, son, that God does not see all our infirmities and that He could not heal them if He pleased? Now as to His not doing so, but permitting us to suffer pains so long as He pleases, do you think that He does that for any

other purpose but that we may leave the whole care of ourselves to Him and put all our confidence in Him alone; and also for the good and advancement of our souls, so that He may be able afterwards to increase the remuneration and everlasting reward for these short afflictions which He sends us?" Zacheus at that was filled with compunction and said: "Pardon me, father, and pray God for me that He may forgive me this sin of want of confidence and conformity to His will, and desire to get better." At parting with Pacomius, in penance for so light a fault he fasted a whole year a fast so rigorous that he only ate once in two days, and then very little and weeping over it. The great Pacomius used afterwards to recount this notable example to his monks, to urge them to perseverance in work, confidence in God, and zeal to make up for small faults.

CHAPTER XIX

Of the Conformity We Should Have to the Will of God in Death as in Life

WE must also be conformable to the will of God as well for death as for life. And, though this dying is of itself a very difficult thing because, as the philosopher Aristotle says: "Death is the most fearful thing of all," yet in the case of religious this difficulty is in great part smoothed down and taken away, since we are already half-way on our journey to it, and in a manner the whole way. As for the first point, one of the reasons why dying is apt to be a difficult thing to the people in the world, and the approach of that hour gives them pain, is because they are leaving riches, honors, pleasures, amusements, and comforts that they had in this life, as also friends and relations, and in one case a man is leaving his wife, in another his children, who are apt to give great anxiety at that hour, especially when they are left ill-provided for. All this the

religious has already left in time, and so it gives him no pain or grief.

When a back tooth is already clear of flesh and loosened from the gums, it is easily drawn; but, if you go about to draw it without loosening it from the flesh, it is apt to cause you much pain. So the religious who is already loosened from the flesh and detached from all those things of the world, is not pained at the hour of death at leaving them, because he has left them already of his own will and with great merit when he entered religion, and not waited for the hour of death to leave them, as those in the world do, when they are forced to leave them although they have no mind so to do, and leave them with great grief and pain and often without any merit at all because it is rather the things that leave the owners than the owners the things. And this is one of the fruits, among many others, of leaving the world and entering religion. St. Chrysostom well observes that they who are in the world, wedded to their property, to the amusements and comforts of this life, find death very painful, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *O death, how bitter is thy memory to the man that hath peace in his riches!* (Ecclus. xli. 1). Even the memory of death is very bitter; what shall be the presence of it! If the thought is bitter, what shall be the taste! But to the religious, who has already left all these things, death is not bitter, but rather very joyful and comfortable, as being the end of all his labors, and an assurance that he is going to receive the recompense and reward of all that he has left for God.

Another chief thing that usually gives pain to people in the world and makes death to them frightful and horrible, as St. Ambrose says, is their bad conscience and want of due dispositions. This again should find no room in the religious, for all his life has been one continual preparation and disposing of himself to die well. It is told of one holy religious how, when the doctor told him to prepare for

death, he answered: "Ever since I took the habit, I have done nothing but to prepare for it." This is the daily exercise of the religious. And the state of religion itself is an instruction to us in the disposition which Christ our Redeemer wishes should be ours at His coming. *Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands* (Luke xii. 35). St. Gregory says that the girding of the loins denotes chastity, and the lamps burning in the hands denote the practice of good works; which two things do mainly shine forth in the state of religion. And so the good religious has nothing to fear in death. And here may be noted a thing that will aid much to our purpose—we have touched upon it above (Treatise II, Chapter 5)—that one of the best signs of having a good conscience and standing well with God, is being well conformed to the divine will in all that regards the hour of death, and looking forward to it with great gladness, as the spouse looks forward to celebrating with her Beloved her heavenly nuptials and espousals. And, contrariwise, it is not a good sign to make a trouble over death and not be in this state of conformity.

There are some good comparisons usually brought to explain this. See you not with what peace and quietness the sheep goes to the butchery, without once bleating or making any resistance, which is the example that Holy Scripture brings of Christ our Redeemer? *He was led like a sheep to the slaughter* (Isaias liii. 7). But the unclean animal, what grunting it sets up and what resistance when they want to kill it! This, then, is the difference between good people, who are represented by the sheep, and evil and carnal people, who are represented by those other animals. The felon under sentence of death, every time he hears the prison door open is saddened, thinking that they mean now to take him out and hang him; but the innocent man, who is marked for discharge, every time he hears the prison opened, rejoices, thinking that they are coming to give him his liberty. So the wicked man, when he hears

the passing-bell ring or when sickness holds him in its grip, is very afraid and downcast because, being conscience-stricken, he fancies it is to cast him into the infernal bon-fire for ever and ever. Let us, then, do what we ought to do as good religious, and not only shall we feel no difficulty in conforming ourselves to the will of God at the hour of death, but we shall rejoice and pray to God with the prophet to draw us out of this prison. *Draw out my soul from prison* (Psalm cxli. 8). St. Gregory on that text of Job: *Thou shalt not fear the beasts of the earth* (Job v. 22), says: "The feeling of this gladness and of this peace and ease of conscience at the hour of death is the beginning of the recompense of the righteous." Now they are beginning to enjoy one little drop of that peace which as a river in flood will soon enter their souls; they are beginning now to feel their eternal blessedness. On the contrary, the wicked are beginning to experience their torment and their hell in that fear and remorse which comes upon them at that hour.

Thus to desire death and rejoice in the thought of it is a very good sign. St. John Climacus says: "He is much to be praised who every day looks for death; but he is a saint who desires it every hour." So we see that those holy ancient patriarchs nourished this desire, *confessing that they are strangers and pilgrims upon earth* (Heb. xi. 13), not resident proprietors; which is well noted by St. Paul: *They who say this, signify that they are looking for home and country* (Heb. xi. 14), as being in exile here. And so the Royal Prophet sighed: *Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged* (Psalm cxix. 5). And if those ancient Fathers said and desired this while the gate of heaven was closed and they could not go straight there, what should our desire be now that the gate is open, and as soon as the soul is purified it passes straight to the enjoyment of God!

CHAPTER XX

*Of Sundry Reasons and Motives for Which We May
Lawfully and Holily Desire Death*

THAT we may better and more perfectly conform ourselves to the will of God in death as in life, we will set down here sundry motives and reasons why we may desire death, that out of them we may choose the best. The first reason why one may desire death is to escape the labors and troubles that this life carries with it, for as the Wise Man says: *Better is death than a bitter life* (Ecclus. xxx. 17). In this manner we see that men of the world often desire death and beg it of God; and this they may do without sin, for, after all, the troubles of this life are so many and so oppressive that it is lawful to desire death to escape them. One of the reasons given by the saints why God allowed so many troubles to befall men, was that we should not be so wedded to the world, nor so much in love with this life, but that we might fix our heart and our love on that other world, where *there shall be no weeping nor pain* (Apoc. xxi. 4). St. Augustine says that God our Lord in His infinite goodness and mercy has wished that this life should be short and quickly come to an end, because it is laborious; and that the other, which we hope for, should be everlasting, so that the labor should last only for a short time, but the joy and the rest forever. St. Ambrose says this life is so full of evils and hardships that, if God had not given us death as a punishment, we might have begged for it as a mercy and remedy, to put an end to so many evils and hardships. It is true that men of the world often sin by the impatience with which they take their troubles and by the way in which they beg death of God with complaints and outbursts of impatience. But if they asked peacefully and submissively: "Lord, if it please Thee, draw

me out of these troubles; enough for me is the time I have already lived," there would be no sin in that.

In the second place, death may be desired with greater perfection, in order not to see the troubles of the Church and the continual offenses committed against God. So we see that the Prophet Elias desired it. Seeing the persecution of Achab and Jezabel, how they had destroyed the altars and put to death the prophets of God, and that they were seeking for him to do the like to him—on fire with zeal for the honor of God, and seeing that he could not mend matters, he went into the deserts and sat down under a tree, *and desired to die, and said: Lord, if it please thee, take me out of this life*, that I may not see so many evils and offenses against Thee, *for I am no better than my fathers* (III Kings xix. 4). And that valiant captain of the people of God, Judas Maccabeus, said: *It is better to die than to see so many evils and offenses against God* (I Macc. iii. 59); and therewith he encouraged his men to fight.

Of the blessed St. Augustine we read in his Life that, when the Vandals had passed over from Spain into Africa and were laying waste everything, sparing neither man nor woman, nor clergy nor laity, nor children nor old men, they came to the city of Hippo, where he was bishop, and surrounded it in great numbers. St. Augustine, seeing such great tribulation—churches without clergy, cities without inhabitants, all destroyed—wept bitterly in his old age and, calling together his clergy, said to them: "I have asked the Lord either to deliver us from these dangers, or to give us patience, or to take me out of this life that I may not see so many evils; and the Lord has granted me the third request." Forthwith he fell sick in the third month of the siege and died of that sickness. And of our blessed Father Ignatius we read in his Life another like example. This is a perfection proper to saints, to feel so keenly the afflictions of the Church and the offenses committed against the majesty of God as to be unable to suffer them, and so desire death, not to see such evil.

There is also another cause and reason, very good and involving great perfection, for desiring and begging death of God, which is to see ourselves free and safe from the danger of offending Him. For certain it is that, while we are in this life, there is no security that we may not possibly fall into mortal sin; and we know that others have fallen who were more advanced than ourselves and had received great gifts of God and were truly holy and very holy. This is one of the things that more particularly strikes fear into the servants of God and makes them desire to go out of this life. To purchase immunity from sin, one may desire even never to have been born and never to have had existence; how much more to die, since sin is a greater evil than non-existence, and it were better not to be at all than to have sinned. *It were better for that man never to have been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24).

St. Ambrose explains to this purpose the saying of Ecclesiastes (iv. 2): *And I praised the dead rather than the living, and I judged him happier than either who hath never been born.* The dead is preferred to the living because he has now ceased to sin, and he that has never been born is preferred to the dead because he has never been capable of sin. And so it will be a very good practice to elicit often these acts in prayer: "Lord, never permit me to be separated from Thee;" "Lord, if I am ever to offend Thee, take me off straightway before I offend Thee, because I have no will to live except to serve Thee; and if my life is not to be to Thy service, I would have it no longer." This is a practice very agreeable to God and very profitable to ourselves, since it contains an act of sorrow and detestation of sin, it contains an act of humility, it contains an act of love of God, it contains a petition one of the most agreeable that we can offer to God. It is related of St. Louis, King of France, that sometimes his holy mother Queen Doña Blanca (Blanche of Aragon) would say to him: "My son, I would rather see you dead before my eyes than in mortal sin."

And so pleasing to God was this desire and this blessing which she uttered over him, that they say that all his life long he never committed a mortal sin. This desire and petition may work the same effect on you.

And, further, not only for the avoiding of mortal sins, but for the avoiding of venial sins, of which we are full in this life, it is good to desire death. The servant of God should be resolved to die rather than tell a lie, which is a venial sin; and anyone who should die on that score would be a martyr (St. Thomas, 2a 2æ, q. 124, art. 5, ad 2). But it is certain that, if we live, we are sure to commit many venial sins. *Seven times shall the just man fall* (Prov. xxiv. 10), that is, many times; and the longer he lives, the oftener will he fall. And not only for the avoidance of venial sins do the servants of God desire now to go out of this life, but to be free from so many faults and imperfections and the many temptations and miseries of our daily experience.

That holy man (Thomas à Kempis) says very well: "O Lord, how I suffer when I set my mind to think of heavenly things, and at once a crowd of carnal thoughts rush in upon me! Ah, what a life is this, where tribulations and miseries never fail, where all things are full of snares and enemies! When one tribulation goes, another comes; and even while the former conflict is going on, sundry others supervene unexpectedly. How can a life be loved that is full of so many bitternesses, liable to so many calamities and miseries? How is it even called a life, engendering as it does so many deaths and plagues?" (Imitation iii. 48 and 20). We read of a very holy woman that she used to say that, if she had the choice of anything, she would choose nothing else but death, since by that means the soul is removed from all fear of ever doing anything that could be a hindrance to pure love. And it seems a more perfect thing to desire to quit this life in order to avoid venial sins and faults and imperfections than for the avoidance of

mortal sins; since the avoidance of mortal sins may be more for fear of hell and for love of self and of one's own advancement than for love of God; but to have such a love of God as to desire death in order to avoid venial sins and faults and imperfections, means great purity of intention and is a thing of high perfection.

But someone will say: "It is to make satisfaction for my faults and defects that I desire to live." To this I say that, if by living longer we always cleared ourselves of the past and did not add new faults, that would be a good pretext; but if you do not clear yourself, but make additions, and the longer you live, the more account you have to render to God, that pretext breaks down. St. Bernard says very well: "Why do we so much desire this life, in which the longer we live, the more we sin?" And St. Jerome: "What difference, think you, is there between him who dies young and him who dies old, except that the old man is more heavily laden with sin than the young man and has a longer account to render to God?" And so St. Bernard comes to a further conclusion herein and uses language in his great humility that we can use with greater truth: "I blush to live because I profit little; I fear to die because I am not prepared. On the whole, however, I prefer to die and commit myself to the mercy of God, because He is bountiful and merciful, than to go on giving scandal to my brethren by my tepid and imperfect life." This is a good conclusion. And Father Master Avila used to say that whoever found himself but indifferently disposed to good, ought to desire death rather than life, by reason of the danger in which he lives, which all ceases with death. St. Ambrose says: "What is death but the burial of vices and the resurrection of virtues?"

All these reasons and motives form good ground for desiring death, but the most perfect motive was that which St. Paul had, to be with Christ Whom he loved so much. *I desire to be loosened and to be with Christ* (Phil. i. 23).

What sayest thou, St. Paul? Why dost thou desire to be loosened from the body? Is it haply to escape sufferings? No, certainly not; for rather *we glory in tribulations* (Rom. v. 3); that is my glory. Then what is it for? To avoid sin? Not that either, *for I am certain that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. viii. 38). He was confirmed in grace and knew that he could not lose it, and so he was not concerned to fear that. Why, then, desirest thou death? To be with Christ. He desired it out of pure love—*Because I languish with love* (Cant. ii. 5). He was sick with love, and so sighed after his Beloved, and any delay seemed long to come to enjoy His presence. St. Bonaventure puts this for the first and highest degree of love of God of the three which he assigns. The first is to love God above all things in the world, so that we would not commit a mortal sin for any of them, nor break any commandment of God so binding. This is what Christ our Redeemer said to that young man in the Gospel: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (Matt. xix. 17). That applies to all. The second degree of charity is not to be content with keeping the commandments, but go on to the counsels, which is proper to religious, who aim not only at what is good, but what is better and more perfect, according to the saying of St. Paul: *Be ye renewed interiorly, to know by experience what is the will of God, good and well-pleasing and perfect* (Rom. xii. 2). The third degree of charity, says St. Bonaventure, is when a man is all aglow and on fire with the love of God, so that he feels that he cannot live without Him; and accordingly he desires to see himself free and loose from the prison of this body, to be with Christ. His desire is that this exile may be repealed, and this wall of flesh broken and fall down that stands in his way and hinders his seeing God. Life to such is a matter of patience, or rather of weariness, and death an object of ardent desire.

Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read in his Life that he had the most ardent desire to go out of this prison and

bondage of the body. So much did his soul sigh to be with his God that at the thought of death he could not restrain his tears, and his eyes were moistened with pure joy. But it is said in that Life that this ardent desire was not so much for the attainment of the Sovereign Good and the enjoyment of that glorious vision, but rather for seeing the glory and supreme felicity of the most sacred humanity of his Lord, Whom he loved so much; and, as the Royal Prophet said, *to see the delight of the Lord* (Psalm xxvi. 4). As here on earth a friend is apt to rejoice at the sight of the glory and honor of one whom he loves heart and soul, so did our blessed Father desire to be with Christ, forgetful of his own interest and enjoyment and actuated by pure love. He desired to rejoice and be glad for the glory of Christ, congratulating Him on the same, which is the highest and most perfect act of love that we can make. In this way the memory of death, far from being bitter to us, will afford us much satisfaction and joy. Pass on a little further and consider that a few days hence you shall be in heaven, in that joy which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive it* (I Cor. ii. 9), and everything for you shall be converted into joy and gladness. Who would not rejoice at the termination of his exile and the end of his labor! Who would not rejoice at gaining and securing his last end for which he was created! Who would not rejoice at entering into possession of his inheritance, and such an inheritance! Now it is by means of death that we enter into the inheritance of heaven. *When the Lord shall send sleep*, the sleep of death, *to his beloved* (Psalm cxxvi. 2), then shall they awake to the inheritance of the Lord. We cannot enter into the possession of these everlasting good things otherwise than by means of death; and so says the Wise Man: *The just hath hope in his death* (Prov. xiv. 32), for that is the ladder by means of which we mount up to heaven, and this is our comfort in this land of exile. *I will sing to thee, O Lord,*

and make it my aim to live a pure life without stain of sin: when wilt thou come to me? (Psalm c. 2). So St. Augustine explains this text: "My thought and desire, O Lord, is to keep myself without stain all my life long, and with that care I will ever go singing, and the burden of my song shall be: When shall this exile, O Lord, be repealed? When wilt Thou come for me? When shall I go, Lord, to Thee?" *When shall I come and appear before the face of God? (Psalm xli. 2).* When shall I be with Thee, O Lord? Oh, how that hour hangs back! Oh, what gladness and joy for me, when they tell me that it is now nigh! *I have rejoiced in the thing that is said to me: We will go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall be standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem (Psalm cxxi. 1-2).* I imagine myself already standing there in company of the angels and the blessed, rejoicing in Thee, O Lord, for ever and ever."

CHAPTER XXI

What Has Been Said in the Preceding Chapter, Confirmed by Examples

SIMON METAPHRASTES in his *Life of St. John the Almoner*, Archbishop of Alexandria, relates how a rich man had a son whom he loved very much, and to obtain of God the preservation of his life and health he asked the saint to pray for him, and gave him a great quantity of gold to distribute in alms to the poor for that intention. The saint did so, and at the end of thirty days the son died. The father was smitten with great grief, thinking that the prayer and alms that had been offered for him had gone for nothing. The patriarch, knowing his sadness, offered prayer for him, asking God to console him. God heard his prayer and sent one night a holy angel from heaven, who appeared to the man and told him that he should know that the prayer made for his son had been heard by God;

and that his son was alive and well in heaven and that his death at that time was the right thing for him in view of his salvation; for, if he had lived, he would have turned out badly and made himself unworthy of the glory of God. He said further that he should know that none of the things that happen to us in this life happen otherwise than by the just judgment of God, although the grounds of His judgments are hidden from men; and that man therefore should not give way to excessive sadness, but receive with patient and grateful mind the things that God ordains. With this warning from heaven the father of the deceased boy remained comforted and animated to serve God.

In the history of the Theban Legion there is recounted a singular favor which St. Maurice, captain of that legion, did to a lady very devout to him. She had an only son whom, to the end that he might progress betimes in religious ways, she consecrated, as soon as he was out of his tender age, in the Monastery of St. Maurice, under the care and government of the monks, as was the custom of those times, and as the fathers of Maurus, Placidus, and other noble Romans did with their children in the time of St. Benedict; and, many years later, St. Thomas Aquinas' mother, Theodora, and his brothers, counts of Aquino, did the like with him in the Monastery of Monte Cassino. In the monastery, this only son grew in letters and good customs and monastic discipline right well and in choir with the monks he had begun to sing very sweetly. But a little fever came upon him, whereof he died. The disconsolate mother came to the church and with infinite tears accompanied the dead body to the tomb. But many tears did not suffice to allay the mother's grief nor to make her cease going every day to the grave, there to weep, without measure; and much more at the time when the divine office was said, did she remember how she was deprived of hearing the voice of her son. The lady persevered in this sad exercise, not only in the daytime in the church, but at nights as well

in her house, without being able to rest. One time, overcome by weariness, she fell asleep; and in her sleep there appeared to her the holy Captain Maurice, and said: "Woman, why art thou continually weeping over the death of thy son, without being able to put a stop to such a flood of tears?" She answered: "I cannot stop this lamentation all the days of my life; and therefore, as long as I live, I shall always bewail my only son, nor shall my eyes cease to shed tears till death close them and my disconsolate soul leave this body." The saint replied: "I tell thee, woman, not to afflict thyself, nor weep over thy dead son any more as though he were dead, since he is not dead but alive, and is rejoicing with us in everlasting life. As a sign of the truth that I tell thee, rise in the morning for matins, and thou shalt hear the voice of thy son among the voices of the monks, singing the divine office; and not only tomorrow shalt thou have that joy, but every time thou art present at the canonical hours in the church. Cease, then, and put an end to thy tears, since thou hast more occasion for great rejoicing than for sadness." The woman arose, and waited with longing desire for the hour of matins to assure herself of the truth, having still in her mind the while some doubt of its being all a dream. The hour came; and, entering the church, the mother recognized at the intoning of the antiphon the most sweet voice of her blessed son, secure now of his glory in heaven. Throwing off all grief, she gave infinite thanks to God. Every day she had the joy of hearing that voice in the divine office of that church. So did God comfort her on this occasion and bestow on her this rich favor.

An author relates how one day a knight was out hunting, and there came out a wild animal which he chased by himself, without a servant, his company being taken up with killing other game. He followed the chase with great eagerness far apart till he came to a thicket, whence he heard a human voice of ravishing sweetness. He wondered at hearing such a voice in a lonely place, because he

thought it could not be any of his servants nor any of the people of that countryside. Desiring to look into the matter, he went into the thicket and found there a leper, hideous to behold and exceedingly filthy, whose flesh was in such a state that it was falling to pieces in every limb and part of his body. At such a sight the knight was greatly amazed and horrified; but, plucking up his courage, he went up to him, saluted him in kind words, and asked if it was he that was singing, and from him that that sweet voice came forth. The leper answered: "Yes, sir, it was I that was singing, and that is my own voice." "How could you be glad," asked the knight, "in the midst of such sufferings?" The poor man answered: "Between God my Lord and me there is no other barrier but this wall of clay, which is my body; when that obstacle is broken through and removed, I shall go to enjoy the vision of His eternal majesty; and as I see it every day falling to pieces, I rejoice and sing with inward gladness of my heart, waiting as I do wait for my departure from this body; for till I leave it I cannot go to the enjoyment of my God, the living fountain, where are found the streams of bliss that flow forever."

St. Cyprian tells of a bishop who was very ill of a grave sickness and reduced to the last extremity, very worried and anxious about death, that was close upon him. He entreated our Lord to prolong his life. Then there appeared to him an angel in the form of a very beautiful and shining youth, who said to him in a grave and severe voice: "On the one hand thou shrinkest from suffering in this life, and on the other, thou hast no mind to go out of it. What wouldst thou have me do with thee?"—giving him to understand that his unwillingness to depart this life was not pleasing to God. The saint declares that the angel said these words to him that in his agony he might tell them and repeat them to others.

Simon Metaphrastes, as quoted by Surius, relates of the holy Abbot Theodosius that, knowing how profitable is the remembrance of death, he sought to give occasion thereof to his disciples for their improvement. Wherefore he had a grave dug, and when it was open, he placed himself with them around it and said: "There is the grave open; for which of you shall we first celebrate the funeral obsequies?" One of his disciples, named Basil, who was a priest, a man of great virtue and so quite disposed and prepared to choose death very gladly, took up the word. Kneeling down, he said: "Bless me, father, for I shall be the first for whom you will have to celebrate the office of requiem." The holy abbot ordered that in his lifetime there should be celebrated for him all the offices that usually are celebrated for the dead, the first day, the third, the ninth, and lastly other funeral honors on the fortieth day. Wonderful to relate, at the end of the office of the fortieth day the monk Basil, being sound and well, without fever or headache or any other malady, like one who falls into a sweet sleep, passed to the Lord to receive the reward of his virtue and of the promptitude and joy wherewith he had desired to be with Christ. Another miracle followed. For during the space of forty days after his death the Abbot Theodosius saw him coming every day to vespers and singing in choir with the rest of the community. Of the rest, none saw him nor heard him sing but one only, a monk of signal virtue, named Aetius, who did hear him sing, but did not see him. He went to Abbot Theodosius and said to him: "Father, don't you hear our brother Basil singing with us?" The abbot answered: "I hear him and see him and will get you to see him as well." They being another day together at office in choir, the abbot saw the holy monk Basil singing in choir with the rest as usual, and pointed him out with his finger to Aetius, praying God at the same time to open his eyes that he might see him. When Aetius saw and recognized him, he went straight running up to embrace him, but

could not grasp him, and the vision disappeared at once, saying in a voice that all heard: "Good-bye, my fathers and brothers, good-bye; for henceforth you shall see me no more."

In the chronicles of the order of St. Augustine it is related of St. Columbanus the Younger, cousin and disciple of the holy Abbot Columbanus, that, being in a high fever and near to death and full of a great hope to die, there appeared to him a shining youth and said to him: "Thine abbot's prayers and tears for thy recovery prevent thy going out of this life." Whereupon the saint made loving complaint to his abbot and said to him weeping: "Why do you force me to live so sad a life as this and hinder my entrance into life everlasting?" Then the abbot ceased to weep and pray for him; and so, assembling the religious and receiving the holy sacraments and embracing them all, he died in the Lord.

St. Ambrose relates of the people of Thrace that when men were born they wept, and when they died they made a great feast. They wept at births and made high festival on the day of a death, reckoning very reasonably, as he says, that people coming into this wretched world, replete with so many woes, deserved to be wept over; and when they quitted this place of exile, it was a rational thing to keep feasts and rejoicings for their deliverance from so many miseries. Now if they did so, being gentiles and pagans and having no knowledge of the glory that we hope for, what will it be reasonable for us to feel and do, we who are enlightened by the light of faith and know the good things that they go to enjoy who die in the Lord? So with much more reason does the Wise Man say: *Better is the day of death than the day of birth* (Eccles. vii. 2). St. Jerome says that for this reason Christ our Redeemer, being about to depart from this world to His Father, said to His disciples, who were sad thereat: *If ye loved me, ye would indeed rejoice, because I go to the Father* (John xiv. 28).

And, contrariwise, when He determined to raise Lazarus, He wept (John xi. 35). He did not weep, says St. Jerome, because he was dead, seeing that He was about immediately to raise him up, but He wept because he had to return to this miserable life; He wept because one whom He had loved and still loved so much had to return to the afflictions of this exile.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the Conformity Which We Should Have to the Will of God in the General Afflictions and Calamities Which He Sends Us

WE must not only practise conformity to the will of God in the troubles and mishaps that particularly concern ourselves, but also in those general calamities, famines, wars, sicknesses, deaths, pestilences, and the like, which the Lord sends to His Church. For this it is necessary to take for granted that, though on the one hand we feel these calamities and chastisements and are touched by the misfortunes and troubles of our neighbor, as is right; yet on the other hand, considering them inasmuch as they are the will of God, ordained by His just judgments to bring blessings and advantages which he knows to be to His greater glory, we are able on this consideration to conform ourselves therein to His most holy will. In the same way we see here on earth how, when a judge sentences a man to death, while he feels and regrets the necessity that this man shall die, for natural compassion or because he is his friend, yet he does pass the sentence and will his death, because it makes for the common good of the whole community.

And while it is true that God has not been pleased to oblige us to conform ourselves to His will in all these things so as positively to will them and love them, but is satisfied

with our suffering them in patience, without contradiction or repugnance to the divine justice, or murmuring thereat; yet theologians and saints say that it would be a work of greater perfection and merit and of a more perfect and entire resignation, if a man were not only to bear those things and suffer them in patience, but were actually to love them and wish them as being the will and good pleasure of God and the order of His divine justice and subservient to His greater glory, as do the blessed in heaven, who in all things fall in with the will of God. So says St. Thomas, and St. Anselm illustrates it by this comparison. He says that in the glory of heaven our will and the will of God shall go as perfectly together as here on earth do the two eyes of one and the same body, so that one cannot look at a thing without the other also looking at it; and thus, though the thing is seen by both eyes, yet it is always seen as one and the same thing. But as the saints there in heaven fall in with the will of God in all things, seeing in them all the order of His justice and the end of His greater glory to which they are directed, so it will be great perfection for us to imitate the blessed therein, wishing the will of God to be done here on earth as it is in heaven. To will what God wills, for the same reason and end that God wills it, can never cease to be a very good thing.

Posidonius relates of St. Augustine in his Life that when the city of Bona [then called Hippo, near the modern Cape Bona], where he resided, was besieged by the Vandals, looking out upon that scene of ruin and mortality, he comforted himself with that saying of a sage: "He will not be a great man who shall take it for a great thing that stones and buildings fall and mortals die"—*Non erit magnus magnum putans quod cadunt ligna et lapides, et mortales moriuntur*. We have more reason to find comfort in the consideration that all these things come from the hand of God and that such is His will; and though the reason why He sends these afflictions and calamities be hidden, yet it cannot be unjust.

The judgments of God are very profound. They are *a deep abyss*, as the prophet says (Psalm xxxv. 7); and we must not wish to scrutinize and investigate them with our mean and limited understanding, which would be great rashness. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who hath been his counselor?* (Rom. xi. 34; Isaias xl. 13). Who has given you a seat at His council board, that you should wish to meddle in this matter? We can only reverence in humility and believe that from infinite Wisdom nothing can come but what is well calculated to its end, and so well calculated that in the end it will prove to be to our greater good and profit. We must always go on this principle, believing that God of His infinite goodness and mercy would never send or permit the like evils and afflictions were it not to draw from them other greater goods. It is the purpose of God to take to heaven by this road many who would otherwise be lost. How many there are who under these afflictions return with all their heart to God and die in true repentance for their sins and are saved, and in any other way would have been damned! Thus what appears a chastisement and a scourge is a mercy and great benefit.

In the Second Book of Maccabees, after having related that horrible and most cruel persecution of the most impious King Antiochus and the blood that he shed without sparing child or man, married or unmarried woman, and how he plundered and profaned the Temple and the abominations that were committed in it by his orders, the author goes on to say: *I beseech those who shall read this book not to be dismayed at these adverse events, but believe that God has permitted and sent all these afflictions, not for the destruction, but for the amendment and correction of our race* (II Macc. vi. 12). St. Gregory says very well to this effect: The leech sucks the blood of the sick man and all his aim is to satisfy himself and drink all he can; but the aim of the physician is to draw off the bad blood and give health to the patient. This is what God aims at through the afflic-

tion and tribulation which He sends us. It would be unwise of the sick man not to let the bad blood be drawn off, looking rather at the lust of the leech than at the intention of the physician. So in our case, whatever trouble comes upon us, whether through the instrumentality of men or through that of any other creature, we should not look at them, but at that most wise physician, who is God; for they all serve Him as leeches and means to draw off the bad blood and give us entire health and salvation. Thus we should understand and believe that He sends us all things for our greater good and profit; and though the Lord had nothing more in view in the matter than to *chastise us* in this life *as sons* (Heb. xii. 7-8), and not keep the chastisement for the next, it would be a great blessing and benefit.

It is related of St. Catherine of Siena that she was once much afflicted by a false witness that they had set up against her, impugning her virtue, when there appeared to her Christ our Redeemer, holding in His right hand a crown of gold, adorned with many pearls and precious stones, and in His left a crown of thorns, and said to her: "My beloved daughter, know that it is necessary to be crowned with these two crowns on different occasions and at different times; this being so, do thou choose which thou preferrest, either to be crowned with this crown of thorns in this life which thou now livest, and to have that other, the precious crown, kept for thee until that life that must last forever; or to have that precious crown given thee in this life, and have kept for thee the crown of thorns till after thy death." The holy virgin answered: "Lord, I have already for a long time denied my own will to follow Thine; therefore it is not for me to choose. But if Thou, O Lord, willest that I should give an answer, I say that I always in this life choose to be conformed to Thy holy Passion, and for love of Thee I wish always to embrace pains for my refreshment." So saying, with her own hands she took the crown of thorns from the hand of the Savior and put it with all her might on her

own head with such force that the thorns pierced her all round; and from that time onwards, on many days she felt an actual pain in her head from the thorns entering in there.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of a Means That Will Help Us Much to Bear Well and with Conformity the Afflictions That the Lord Sends Us, As Well Particular As General, Which Is the Knowledge and Inward Consciousness of Our Own Sins

IT is the common doctrine of the saints that, ordinarily speaking, God is wont to send those public calamities and chastisements for sins committed, as we are told in Holy Scripture, which is full of such narratives. *It is for our sins, O Lord, that thou hast sent us these afflictions, because we sin and do evil and obey not thy commandments: therefore whatever thou hast sent upon us, and all that thou hast done us, in strict justice hast thou done it* (Dan. iii. 28). Thus we see that God chastised His people and gave them over into the hands of their enemies when they offended Him and delivered them when they repented of their sins, did penance, and returned to Him. On this account Achior, captain and chief of the sons of Ammon, declared to Holofernes how God protected the people of Israel and how He chastised them when they departed from His obedience. "Therefore," he said, "before attacking them, contrive to find out if at this period they have offended God. If that is the case, you may make sure of the victory; but if not, you had better give up this enterprise. For it will not go well and nothing will come of it but disgrace and confusion, for God will fight for His people, against Whom none can fight and prevail" (Judith v. 5-24).

The saints take special note of this on those words which Christ our Redeemer, after He had healed him, addressed to the man at the Sheep Pool who had been ailing for thirty-eight years. *Now thou art healed: take care henceforth to sin no more, lest something worse befall thee* (John v. 14). Accordingly, one of the means that will help us much in calamities and tribulations, as well general as particular, to fall in with the will of God and bear them in great patience, will be to enter forthwith into ourselves and consider our sins and how we deserve this chastisement, for in this way, whatever adversity befalls us, we shall bear it well and judge it to be less than what would be in proportion to our faults.

St. Bernard and St. Gregory handle this point well. St. Bernard says: "If the fault is felt inwardly, as it ought to be felt, the outward punishment will be felt little or not at all." Thus the holy King David did not feel the curses which Semei launched out against him, seeing the war which his own son was making upon him. *Thou seest that my own son, the fruit of my body, is seeking my life: how much more now a son of Jemini!* (II Kings xvi. 11). St. Gregory on that saying (Job xi. 6): *Thou shalt know that God chastiseth thee less than thy wickedness deserveth*, illustrates this by a good comparison. When a sick man feels his ulcer inflamed or his flesh putrid, he gives himself with good grace over into the hands of the surgeon, to open and cut where he pleases; and the more inflamed and the more putrid the wound, the more willingly does he suffer the knife and the cautery. So when a man really feels the wound and infirmity that sin has caused in his soul, he willingly submits to the cautery of affliction and humiliation and mortification with which God goes about to cure this wound and draw off the putrid matter from it. "The pain of the scourge," he says, "is mitigated when the fault is owned"—*Dolor flagelli temperatur cum culpa cognoscitur*. If you do not take in good part the mortification and afflic-

tion that is offered you, it is because you do not know the malady of your faults nor feel the rottenness that is in you, and so you cannot bear to suffer the cautery and the lancet.

Holy men and true servants of God not only take their punishment willingly, but they desire it and earnestly ask it of God. *Who will grant that my petition may come about, and that he who hath begun will even crush me outright, let loose his hand upon me, and cut me down, and this be my consolation, that afflicting me with pain he spare me not* (Job vi. 8). *Prove me, O Lord, and try me*, says the psalmist, *for I am prepared for scourges* (Psalm xxv. 2; xxxvii. 18)—*Bonum mihi, quia humiliasti me*. The servants of God, says St. Gregory, desire that His Majesty may chastise and humble them in this life; and they are rather out of heart when they consider their faults on the one hand, and on the other see that God has not chastised them for them; for then they suspect and fear that He means to defer their chastisement to the next life, when it will be done with rigor. And this is what Job goes on to say: *And this be my consolation, that in afflicting me with sorrows he spare me not*. It is as though they would say: Since God pardons some in this life to chastise them forever in the next, let Him not pardon me in that way in this life, that afterwards He may pardon me forever. Let God chastise me as a loving Father, that He may not afterwards chastise me as a rigorous judge. I will not murmur nor complain of His scourges; *I will not contradict the utterances of the Holy One* (Job vi. 10). This is also what St. Augustine says: "Here burn, here cut, here spare me nothing, that Thou mayest spare me for eternity."

It is part of our ignorance and blindness to feel bodily afflictions so acutely and to take spiritual afflictions so lightly. It is not afflictions that we should feel so much as sins. If we knew and pondered well the gravity of our faults, all punishment would seem to us little and we should say with Job (xxxiii. 27): *I have sinned and indeed done*

wrong, and have not received as I deserved—words that we ought to carry ever in our heart and repeat often with our mouth. I have sinned, O Lord, and indeed have done wrong and offended Thy Divine Majesty, and I have not been chastised as I deserved; for all that we can suffer in this life is nothing in comparison with what one single [mortal] sin deserves. *Would that thou couldst come to understand that God punisheth thee much less than thy wickedness deserveth* (Job xi. 6). Whoever will consider that he has offended God and deserved to be in hell for ever and ever, what ignominies, what injuries, what insults will he not take with good will in recompense and satisfaction for the offenses that he has committed against the majesty of God! *Let him curse, for perchance the Lord will be pleased to regard my affliction, and will render me blessings for the curses of this day* (II Kings xvi. 12), said David when Semei cursed and insulted him. Let him alone, let him insult me, let him load me with injuries and insults; perchance the Lord will be satisfied with that and will hold Himself compensated and satisfied thereby for my sins and have mercy on me; and that will be a great piece of luck for me. This is the way in which we should embrace the insults and hardships that meet us. They are welcome, for haply the Lord will be pleased to take them in discount and satisfaction for our sins and will have mercy on us, and that will be great good luck. If the time that we wasted in complaining and resenting our afflictions, we spent in turning in this manner upon ourselves, we should please God more and mend matters better.

The saints used this means on the like occasions and made a practice of it. Thus we read of some of them, as St. Catherine of Siena and others, that they attributed to their sins the afflictions and scourges that God sent His Church, and said: "I am the cause of these wars; my sins are the cause of this pestilence and these troubles that God sends us." They thought that their sins deserved all that

and more. And it makes in confirmation of this, that God has often punished a whole people for the sin of one individual, as for the sin of David He sent a pestilence upon all the people of Israel, and Scripture says that there died seventy thousand men in three days (II Kings xxiv. 15). But you will say, he was a king, and for the sins of the head God chastises the people. But for the sin of Achan, a private man, who had stolen certain little things at Jericho, God punished the whole people, so that three thousand soldiers of the most valiant in the army turned their backs on the enemy and were forced to fly on his account. Not only for the sin of the head, but also for the sin of an individual God is wont to punish the rest. In this way the saints explain what Holy Scripture so often repeats, that God visits the sins of the fathers on the children even to the third and fourth generation. The *fault* of the father, Scripture says, shall not pass on to the son, nor that of the son on to the father. *The soul that sinneth, the same shall die: the son shall not bear the fault of the father, nor the father the fault of the son* (Exod. xx. 5; xxxiv. 7: Num. xiv. 18; Ezech. xviii. 20). But as regards *punishment*, God is wont to punish some for the sins of others; and so perhaps for my sins, or yours, God will punish the whole house and the whole order.

Let us, then, keep before our eyes on the one hand this consideration, and on the other the good pleasure of God, and so we shall easily fall in with His will and with the afflictions which He sends us, and shall say with the priest Heli: *He is the Lord, let him do what is good in his eyes* (I Kings iii. 18); and those holy Maccabees: *As it shall be the will of God in heaven, so let it be done* (I Macc. iii. 60); and with the Prophet David: *I was dumb, O Lord, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it* (Psalm xxxviii. 10). I complained not, O Lord, of the troubles Thou hast sent me; rather, as if I were dumb, I was silent and bore them with much patience and conformity because

I knew, Lord, that Thou didst send them. This should be always our consolation in all things. God wills it, God does it, God commands it; it is He that sends it; it is welcome. There is no other reason required for bearing all things well.

On those words of the psalm: *My beloved is as the son of the unicorn* (Psalm xxviii. 7), the saints observe that God is compared to the unicorn because the unicorn has its horn below its eyes, that it may see right well where it strikes, not as the bull, which has its horns above and does not see where it deals its blow; and, further, the unicorn heals with that very horn wherewith it strikes; so God heals with that wherewith He strikes.

So pleasing to God is this conformity and humble submission to punishment that sometimes it is a means to appease the Lord and make Him give over the punishment. In the ecclesiastical histories it is told of Attila, King of the Goths, who laid waste so many provinces and called himself the Terror of the World and the Scourge of God, that, when he was besieging the city of Troyes in Champagne, in France, there went out to meet him St. Lupus, bishop of that city, clad in his pontifical robes, with all his clergy, and said to him: "Who art thou, that troublest and disturbest the earth?" He replied: "I am the Scourge of God." Then the holy bishop bade them open the gates, saying: "Welcome to the Scourge of God." And the soldiers coming into the city, the Lord blinded them in such a way that they went through without doing any harm. For though Attila was a scourge, the Lord would not have him be such to those who received him as His scourge with so great submission.

CHAPTER XXIV

Of the Conformity That We Ought to Have with the Will of God in Dryness and Desolation in Prayer

NOT only ought we to conform ourselves to the will of God in exterior, natural, and human things, but also in that which many think it is a point of sanctity to desire more and more; I mean, in spiritual and supernatural goods, as divine consolations, even virtues, even the gift of prayer, peace, restfulness, and inward tranquillity of soul. But someone will ask: Is it possible to have in these things a will of one's own and an inordinate love, so that it should become necessary to check oneself in these things? Yes, I say, it is; and here we shall see the malice of self-love, since it shrinks not from intermingling its baleful poison in such good things. Consolations and spiritual delights are good, because with them the soul easily puts aside and abhors all pleasure and delight in the things of earth, which are the food and nourishment of vices, and animates and bestirs herself to go on nimbly in the service of God, as the prophet says: *I ran in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart* (Psalm cxviii. 32). The heart is dilated and enlarged by spiritual consolation, as it is straitened and narrowed by sadness. Hence the Prophet David said that, when God sent him consolations, they were as wings that made him run and fly in the way of virtue and God's commandments.

Spiritual consolations are besides a great aid to a man to break his will and conquer his appetites and mortify his flesh and more vigorously take up the crosses and afflictions that occur. And therefore God usually sends consolations and delights to those to whom He intends to send troubles and tribulations, that so they may make ready and be disposed to bear them well and profitably. Thus Christ consoled His disciples on Mount Thabor with His

glorious Transfiguration, that afterwards they might not be shocked at seeing Him suffering and dying on a cross. So we see that God is ordinarily wont to give these spiritual consolations to beginners, to make them effectually abandon the delights of earth for those of heaven; and afterwards, when He has smitten them with His love and they have struck deep roots in virtue, He usually exercises them with aridities, that they may gain more patience and humility and merit an increase of grace and glory by serving God for pure love, without consolations. And that is why some, at the beginning, at their first entrance into religion, or haply out in the world when they had their first desires of religious life, felt more consolation and taste for spiritual things than they experienced afterwards. For God treated them according to their age, giving them the milk of babes to uproot and detach them from the world and make them abhor and reject its offers; but afterwards, when they became able to eat their bread, crust and all, then He gives them the food of grown-up men. That is why the saints advise us, in time of consolation, to prepare for temptation, as in time of peace men make ready for war, because consolations are usually the first vespers of temptations and tribulations.

As spiritual consolations are very good and very profitable if we know how to use them, so, when the Lord gives them, they are to be received with thankfulness. But if we were to dwell upon these consolations and desire them solely for our own satisfaction, that would be a piece of vicious and disorderly self-love. As in things necessary for life, like eating, drinking, sleeping, and the rest, it would be a fault if a man were to take for an end in these actions the pleasure which they give, so it is with consolations in prayer—to take them for an end in themselves would be a fault of spiritual gluttony. We are not to desire or take these things for our own pleasure and satisfaction, but as a means to the ends already prescribed. As the

sick man who has a disgust for the food necessary to his sustenance, rejoices to find some taste in it, not for the taste, but for the awakening of the appetite to be able to eat and preserve life, so the servant of God should not seek spiritual consolation to rest therein, but because by this spiritual refreshment the soul is animated and nourished to labor in the way of virtue and hold fast thereto. In this way delights are not desired as delights, but for the greater glory of God and inasmuch as they redound to His greater honor and glory.

But I further say that, though one does desire these spiritual consolations in this manner and for the ends stated, which are good and holy, there may nevertheless be excess in such desires, and an admixture of disorderly self-love, in case they are desired without restraint and with unmeasured eagerness and greed, so that, if they fail you, you are not so content or conformed to the will of God, but rather restless, complaining, and in pain. This is a disorderly affection and spiritual greediness. One should not be attached so ardently and without measure to spiritual consolations that, if God be not pleased to give them, the soul loses its peace and repose and conformity to the will of God; for better is the will of God than all those consolations, and more important it is to live in conformity and satisfaction with what God is pleased to give.

What I say of spiritual delights and consolations, I understand also of the gift of prayer and the ready entry into it which we desire to have, and of peace and tranquillity and interior repose of the soul, and of all other spiritual advantages. Here also there may be a disorderly affection and greediness when such things are desired with such impetuosity and greed that, in case of failure to attain all that is desired, there arise complaint and discontent and lack of conformity to the will of God. And by "spiritual delights and consolations" we here understand, not only devotion and sensible delights and comforts, but also the

very substance and gift of prayer, and entering upon it and remaining in it with that quiet and calm we should like to have. Or, rather, of this we shall now principally treat, showing how we are to conform ourselves in the matter to the will of God and not indulge in unmeasured greed and impetuous cravings therein.

As for delights and consolations and sensible movements of devotion, a man would readily forego all that if what is substantial in prayer were given him and he felt in himself the fruit thereof; for all know well enough that prayer does not consist in these smacks of fervor and fits of tender devotion; and therefore but little virtue is needed to go without them. But to go to meditation and be then turned into stone, with an aridity so great that you have started it only to find God locking you out and hiding Himself, as though there had come upon you that curse wherewith He threatened His people: *I will make the heavens as of iron and the earth of brass* (Levit. xxvi. 19; Deut. xxviii. 23)—for that, more virtue is required and more fortitude. Heaven to such persons seems of iron and earth of brass, forasmuch as there never falls on them one drop of rain to soften their heart and yield a harvest to maintain them. There is nothing but barrenness and dryness without end. And not only is there dryness, but sometimes such a great distraction and wandering of thoughts—aye, and sometimes such foul and evil thoughts—that it seems you have come there only to be tempted and molested with all kinds of temptations. Tell such people that it is a good remedy to think of death and Christ crucified, and they will say: “I know that already myself; if I could only do it, what would be wanting to me?” Sometimes you are in such a state at meditation that you cannot think of that; or if you do think of it and contrive to bring it to mind, it does not move you nor pick you up at all; it makes no impression. This is what we call desolation, dryness, and spiritual dereliction; and in this also it is necessary to conform ourselves to the will of God.

This is a point of great importance because it is one of the commonest complaints and severest struggles that those meet with who take to meditation, and all groan and lament when they find themselves in this condition. Hearing tell of the praises of meditation, how as your meditation goes, so goes all the day and all your life; and how meditation is one of the principal means that we have for our own advancement and the good of our neighbor; and all the while seeing themselves, as they think, so far from meditating, they give themselves much pain and fancy that God has abandoned and forgotten them; they come to fear that they have lost His friendship and are in His disgrace, because now they can find no access to Him. And their temptation is increased by seeing other people in a few days making much progress in meditation, as it were without trouble, while they, for all their labor and longing, do not get on at all. Hence spring other and worse temptations: as to complain of God for treating them in that manner, and to be minded to give over the exercise of meditation, as a thing not made for them, since they do so badly in it. The pain of all this is much increased by the devil's putting it into their minds that they themselves are the cause of it all, and it is for their fault that God treats them so. Thus some people live very disconsolate lives and come out from meditation as from a torture, sad and melancholy, a torment to themselves and to all who have to deal with them. We will proceed now, by the grace of the Lord, to answer and meet this temptation and complaint.

CHAPTER XXV

Satisfying the Complaint of Those Who Are Dry and Disconsolate at Meditation

IN the first place, I do not say that a man should not feel glad when God visits him, for it is clear that one cannot but feel gladness at the presence of one's Beloved; nor do I say that one should not feel His absence, when He chastises with aridities and temptations, because I see well that one cannot help feeling what Christ our Redeemer felt, being forsaken by His eternal Father, when on the Cross He cried: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46). But what I desire is that we should know how to profit by this affliction and trial wherewith God is often wont to prove His elect—that we should meet it with fortitude, and say: *Not as I will, but as thou* (Matt. xxvi. 39). Holiness and perfection do not consist in these consolations, nor in a high and exalted habit of prayer, nor are such things the measure of our advancement. Our advancement consists in true love of God, in union and entire conformity with the will of God, for bitter and for sweet, for adversity as for prosperity. We ought to take from the hand of God the cross of dereliction as we take the delight of consolation, giving thanks for both the one and the other. “If Thou wouldest have me in darkness, blessed be Thou; and if Thou wouldest have me in light, blessed be Thou; if Thou wishest to console me, blessed be Thou; and if Thou wishest to have me in trouble, blessed be Thou” (A Kempis, iii. 17). So St. Paul: *In all things return thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you all* (I Thess. v. 18). If it is the will of God, what more have we to desire? What is there more in life than to please God? If He is conducting my life by this dark and rugged path, I have no mind to yearn after another way, bright and pleasant though it be. God wishes my

neighbor to go by that road which I see and have a liking for, and me by this desert, void of all consolation; I would not exchange my barrenness for his fertility. So they say who have eyes opened to reality, and with this they console themselves. Father Master Avila says well: "Oh, if the Lord would open our eyes, how we should see clearer than the light of the sun, that all things in heaven and earth are too mean, too unworthy, for us to desire or delight in apart from the will of God; and there is nothing, however small and bitter it be, that has not its value when joined to that will. It is incomparably better to be in anguishes, desolations, aridities, and temptations, if He would have it so, than to enjoy any amount of sweetnesses, consolations, and contemplations away from His will."

But someone will say: "If I knew that this was God's will and that He was pleased and satisfied therewith, I should easily fall in with it and be satisfied to pass my whole life in this condition, but it seems to me that God wants me to make my meditation better and with more recollection and attention; and this is what gives me pain, that it is through my own fault and negligence and my not doing my part that I am so dry and cannot get at the meditation. If only I understood and were satisfied that I was doing all that rested with me, and that there was no fault on my part, I should not be in pain at all." This complaint is well drawn up; there is nothing more to be said; it sums up all the reasons that can be urged on behalf of those who make the like complaints. Therefore if we can meet this well we shall have made a good thing of it, seeing that it is such a common complaint and that there is no one, however holy and perfect he may be, who does not suffer at times from these aridities and spiritual desolations.

So we read of the blessed St. Francis and of St. Catherine of Siena, for all their being such cherished favorites of God. St. Anthony Abbot enjoyed such a high prayer that nights seemed to him but a passing breath of time and he com-

plained of the sun's rising so early. Yet at times he was so fatigued and overwhelmed with evil and importunate thoughts that he cried out to God: "Lord, I would fain be good, and my thoughts will not let me!" St. Bernard made the same complaint and cried: "My heart is withered, it is clotted like milk, parched like earth without water; it is so hard that it cannot be moved to tears; psalmody is tasteless, I have no mind to read, I have no delight in prayer, and find not my customary meditations. Where is that inebriation of spirit? Where that serenity of mind, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Thus this doctrine I am delivering is necessary for all, and I trust in the Lord that I shall be able to satisfy all.

To begin, then, I grant that it is all your fault—your distractions and your dryness and your inability to pray. It is well that you should understand and say that for your past sins and present negligences the Lord is minded to chastise you, by giving you no access to meditation, leaving you unable to keep recollected or quiet or attentive, you not deserving otherwise. Still, it does not follow that you have ground of complaint, but only of great conformity to the will of God. Would you see this clearly? Out of your own mouth and from what you yourself have said, I am minded to judge. *Out of thine own mouth I judge thee* (Luke xviii. 23).

[Q. Question. R. Reply.]

Q. Do you not know and say that for your past sins and your present faults and negligences you deserve great chastisement of God?

R. Yes, for sure; I have many times deserved hell, and so no chastisement will be too great for me, but all will be mercy and indulgence in comparison with what I deserve. And if God shall wish to send me some chastisement in this life, I will take that for a particular benefit, holding it for an assurance that God has pardoned my sins

and that He does not mean to chastise me in the next life, seeing that He chastises me in this.

Q. Enough, no more is needed; I am content with that. But that it be not all words, let us come to deeds. This is the chastisement that God wishes you to suffer now for your sins—these fits of desolation, these distractions and aridities, this spiritual dereliction, this turning of your heaven into bronze and your earth into brass, this device of God's shutting Himself off and hiding Himself from you and giving you no access to meditation. Hereby God means to chastise you now and purge away your faults. Do you not think that your past sins and your present pieces of carelessness and negligence well deserve this chastisement?

R. Yes, for sure; and this is very little compared with what I deserve, and is full of justice and mercy. Of justice, because I have so often shut the gate of my heart to God and have turned a deaf ear when He rapped at my door with His holy inspirations; and as I have resisted them many times, it is just now that, though I cry out, He turns a deaf ear and answers me not and will not open the door to me, but slams it in my face. This is a most just punishment, but very little for what I deserve. Again it is full of mercy because I deserve much more than I get.

Q. Then conform yourself to the will of God in this chastisement and receive it with thanksgiving, since He chastises you with so much mercy and not according to your deserts. Do you not say that you deserved hell? Then how do you dare to ask of God consolations and comforts at meditation, and to find open access and familiarity with God therein, and the peace and quiet and repose of sons well cherished and entertained? And how do you dare to make complaint of the contrary? Do you not see that that is great impudence and great pride? Let it be enough for you that God keeps you in His house and allows you to stand in His presence; and esteem and recognize that for a great favor and benefit.

If we had humility of heart, we should never open our mouths to complain, whatever way the Lord treated us, and thus this temptation would easily cease.

CHAPTER XXVI

How to Turn Aridity and Desolation into a Good and Profitable Prayer

NOT only should we stop this complaining within ourselves, but we should contrive to draw profit from these aridities and desolations and make out of them a good prayer (Treatise V, Chapter 19). When we feel thus distressed, we should say: "Lord, inasmuch as this is my own fault, I am very sorry for it; but inasmuch as it is Thy will and the just chastisement of my sins, I accept it with hearty good will, not merely now or for a short time, but for all the days of my life, even though they be many. I offer myself to this cross and am ready to bear it with thankfulness." This patience and humility, this resignation and conformity, is much more pleasing to God than complaints and unmeasured fretting. Tell me, who do you think would be more pleasing to his parents—the son who was content with whatever they gave him, or the other who was satisfied with nothing, but was always grumbling and complaining, thinking whatever he got was not good enough? Clearly, the former; and so it is with God. The son who suffers in silence, in content and conformity with the will of his heavenly Father, taking whatever He sends him, though it be a hard and fleshless bone, is more grateful and acceptable to God than the malcontent and the grumbler, who goes about complaining that he gets nothing or that what is given to others is not given to him. Tell me, further, who does better and moves people more to give him alms and show him compassion and pity—the beggar who complains because they do not answer him at

once and because they give him nothing, or the beggar who stands perseveringly at the rich man's gate with patience and silence, making no complaint, satisfied with having rung once and made sure that they heard him? The master of the house knows that he is there, waiting with humility and patience. It is clear that this poor man moves men much to pity, while the other, the proud one, rather disgusts them and stirs their indignation. So it is also with God. I ask you, what better meditation could you make and what greater spiritual fruit could you gather than much patience in tribulation, much conformity to the will of God, and much love of Him? Why do we go to meditation except to gain those ends? When God sends us aridities and temptations in meditation, and we conform ourselves to His will, we make one of the greatest acts of patience and love of God that it is possible to make. Love is shown in suffering afflictions; and these aridities are the greatest of afflictions to the servants of God. Spiritual men feel them more than what touches property, health, or temporal advantage. To conform ourselves to the will of God in afflictions like these, is to imitate Christ our Redeemer in the spiritual dereliction which He suffered on the Cross; and to accept this spiritual cross for a whole lifetime, if the Lord be pleased to give it, solely to give satisfaction to God, is a great act of patience and of love of God and a very high and profitable prayer and a thing of great perfection, so much so that some call these afflicted persons excellent martyrs.

Once more I ask: Why do you go to meditation but to gain humility and self-knowledge? How often have you asked God to give you to understand who you are? Now in this manner He has heard your prayer and wishes to give you to understand that He has heard it. Some people will have it that self-knowledge consists in a deep sense of sin and in shedding many tears thereupon. But they are wrong; that is God, not you. To be like a stone, that is

being yourself. And if God does not strike the rock, neither water will come forth therefrom nor honey. In this consists self-knowledge, the beginning of all good; and of this you have your hands full when you are in this condition. If you gain this self-knowledge from your meditation, you will have gained great fruit therefrom.

CHAPTER XXVII

Other Reasons to Comfort and Conform Us to the Will of God in Dryness and Desolation at Meditation

ALTHOUGH it is well to think, for our greater confusion and humiliation, that our distress comes through our own fault, nevertheless we should be aware that such distress is not always the chastisement of sin, but an arrangement and deep providence of the Lord, Who distributes His gifts as suits Him. It is not proper for the whole body to be eyes, or feet, or hands, or head, but there must be different members in the Church; and this special and eminent prayer of which we have spoken in the treatise On Prayer (Chapters 4-5) is not suited to be given to all, nor need it be given to them, because they do not merit it. Even though they did merit it, nevertheless they will merit more in another way, and God will do them a greater favor in giving them this than in giving them that. There have been many great saints of whom we do not know that they attained anything else than the ordinary prayer; and if they did attain anything more, still they would say with St. Paul: *Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14).

Father Master Avila makes hereon a very consoling remark. "There are some," he says, "whom God leaves in desolation for many years and sometimes for the whole of their lives; and theirs, I believe, is the happier lot if they have faith enough not to be disheartened, and patience and

fortitude enough to suffer so great a deprivation." Once a man comes to persuade himself that this is the happier condition for him, he will readily fall in with the will of God. Saints and masters of spiritual life give many reasons to explain and prove that this is the happier condition for such people; but for the present we will give only one of the principal reasons, taken from St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St. Gregory, and others. It is that not all are equal to preserving humility at the height of contemplation. Scarce have we shed one little tear when we fancy ourselves spiritual men, men of prayer, and perhaps compare and prefer ourselves to others. Even St. Paul seems to have needed some counterpoise not to be lifted up by these things. *Lest the greatness of revelations should lift me up, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, an angel of satan to buffet me* (II Cor. xii. 7). Though he had been raised up to the third heaven and had received great revelations, yet God permitted temptation to come upon him, to humble him and let him know his weakness. Therefore, though this road seems the higher, that other is the safer. And so the most wise God, Who guides us all to one end, which is Himself, takes each by that path which He knows to be most suitable to him. Haply, if you found great facility in meditation, instead of coming forth from it humbled and improved, you would have come out proud and puffed up; but this other way you are ever humbled and confounded and take yourself for the least of all. This way, then, is for you the more suitable and safe, though you do not understand it. *You know not what you ask* (Matt. xx. 22). St. Gregory teaches a good lesson to our purpose on those words of Job: *If he cometh to me, I shall not see him, If he goeth away, I shall not understand* (Job ix. 11). Man is so blinded by sin, he says, that he does not know when he is approaching God or when he is going away from Him; and oftentimes what he thinks is a grace of God and a means of drawing nearer to God, turns out after all to be

divine anger and an occasion of God's retiring from him; while oftentimes what he thinks is divine anger and a cause of God's withdrawing from him and forgetting him, is a grace and a cause why God should not withdraw from him. Who is there that, seeing himself elevated to a lofty height of contemplation and much consoled and favored of God, will not think that he is drawing nearer to God? Yet oftentimes from these favors one comes to a sense of pride and false security and vain confidence, and the devil brings him to fall just by that whereby he thought he was mounting up and approaching nearer to God. And, contrariwise, a man seeing himself disconsolate and afflicted with grave temptations, much harassed with indecent and blasphemous thoughts and thoughts against faith, thinks that God is angry with him and is forsaking him, whereas it is just then that God is nearer him, because thereon he humbles himself more and knows his own weakness and flings himself upon God more heartily and thoroughly, putting in Him all his confidence and seeking never to be separated from Him. Thus that is not the better way which you think is best, but the way by which God chooses to take you.

Further, this very bitterness, pain, and grief that you feel, thinking that you do not practise prayer so well as in reason you should, may be another ground of comfort; it is a particular grace and favor of God and a sign that you love Him, since there is no grief without some love. I cannot be sorry for not serving Him well, without some purpose and will to serve Him well; thus this pain and grief spring from love of God and desire to serve Him better. If you made no account of serving Him badly, of making a bad meditation, of doing your work ill, it would be a bad sign; but to feel pain and grief because you do things badly is a good sign. But this pain is appeased by the consideration that the failure, so far as it is painful, is the will of God, and by conforming yourself to that will and giving Him thanks that He lets you be thus desirous to please Him,

although it seem to you that your performances are poor.

And further, though we do nothing else in prayer but assist thereat and stand in presence of His Royal and Divine Majesty, we thereby do great service to God, as we see that it greatly makes to the majesty of kings and princes on earth that the grandees of their court come every day to the palace and assist and stand there in presence. *Blessed is he that watcheth at my gates daily, and keepeth guard at the posts of my door* (Prov. viii. 34). To the glory of the majesty of God, and the lowliness of our condition, and the greatness of the business we have on hand, it belongs that we should be oftentimes in waiting, keeping watch at the gates of His heavenly palace; and when He opens the gates, render Him thanks; and when He opens not, humble ourselves, knowing that we do not deserve it. In this way, your prayer will always be excellent and profitable, saying with Bartholomew of the martyrs: "All hail, thou bitterness, bitter and most bitter, but full of graces and blessings."

CHAPTER XXVIII

That It Is a Great Mistake and Grave Temptation to Give Over Meditation for Finding Ourselves in the Condition Aforesaid

HENCE it follows that it is a great mistake and a grave temptation, when one sees himself in this condition, to give up meditation or not go on with it so steadily, on the idea that one can make nothing of it, and it is sheer waste of time. With this temptation the devil has made many give up meditation, not only many seculars, but also many religious. And when he cannot make them give it up altogether, he gets them to make less effort over it, or spend in it less time than they ought. Many begin to give themselves to meditation, and so long as they have fine weather

and devotion they go on and continue very well; but coming to the season of dryness and distraction, they fancy that this is no prayer, but a new sin, being there before God with so much distraction and so little reverence. Thus, little by little, they abandon meditation and fancy they serve God better in other exercises and occupations than in being there making such a poor figure at prayer. The devil, seeing their weakness here, makes the best of his opportunity and attacks them in such force with evil thoughts and distractions at meditation that they take that time for lost. Thus, little by little, he gets them to abandon meditation altogether, and virtue with it. In some cases things go further still; indeed, we know many in which this has been the first step to perdition.

There is a friend who will share thy table and will not stand by thee in the day of thy distress (Ecclus. vi. 10). To rejoice in God—there is none who will not do that; but to labor and suffer for His sake is the sign of true love. When meditation is attended with consolation and devotion, it is not much for you to persevere in it and spend many hours over it. You may do that for your own satisfaction and to suit your own taste. It is a sign that such was your motive, when you cease to persevere the moment that consolation fails. God's true friends are proved when He sends them desolation and dryness and distractions. Then are seen the faithful servants who seek not their own interest, but purely the will and contentment of God. It is then that we must persevere in humility and patience, spending over meditation all the time marked out for it, and even a little more, as our Father advises, thereby to overcome the temptation and show ourselves strong and resolute against the devil.

Palladius relates that, when he was engaged in consideration of the things of God, shut up in a cell, he had a great temptation of aridity and many annoying thoughts; and it came into his head that he should abandon that exer-

cise as doing him no good. He went to the holy Macarius of Alexandria and told him of this temptation and asked his advice. The saint replied: "When these thoughts tell you to go your way and that you are making nothing of it, tell them: 'Here I mean to stay within the walls of this cell for love of Christ.'" Which was telling him to persevere and be satisfied with doing that holy work for love of Christ, even though he gathered no fruit from it but that. That is a very good answer for us when this temptation comes to us. For the principal end which we should have in view in this holy exercise, and the intention with which we should go to it and work at it, is not our own pleasure and satisfaction, but to do a good and holy work, thereby to please God and give Him satisfaction, and pay some part of the great debt we owe Him for being what He is and the innumerable benefits that we have received at His hand. Since He wishes and is pleased at my being here just now, I am satisfied although I seem to be doing nothing.

It is related of St. Catherine of Siena that for several days she was in desolation, deprived of spiritual consolations and not feeling her usual fervor of devotion, and besides much molested with evil thoughts, foul and impure thoughts which she could not shake off. Still she did not on that account give up her prayer, but did it the best way she could, persevering in it very diligently, and she thus addressed herself: "Thou vile sinner, thou dost not deserve any consolation. What, shalt not thou fain be content with not being condemned to hell, even though thou wert to bear these darknesses and torments all thy life long? Surely it was not to get consolations in this life that thou didst betake thyself to the service of God, but to enjoy Him in heaven everlastingly. Get up, then, and go on with thy exercises and persevere in fidelity to thy Lord."

Let us, then, imitate these examples and steady ourselves by these words of a holy man: "Let this be my consolation,

O Lord, willingly to forego all human consolation; and if Thy consolation also fail me, let Thy will and Thy just proving of me be to me in place of the highest consolation" (A Kempis). If we attain to this, that the will and satisfaction of God is all our satisfaction, and this very lack of all consolation is our satisfaction for its being the will and satisfaction of God, then shall we have true satisfaction such as nothing can take away from us.

CHAPTER XXIX

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the chronicles of the order of St. Dominic it is related that a Father of the order, one of the first and most considerable, a man of exemplary life and great purity of soul, never felt any manner of consolation or pleasure in the exercises of religion, neither in prayer, nor in contemplation, nor in reading. And as he was always hearing tell of the dainty cheer God made for others and of the spiritual transports they experienced, he was half in despair. In this state he set himself in prayer one night before a crucifix, weeping bitterly the while, and went so far as to utter these wild words: "Lord, I have always heard that in goodness and gentleness Thou surpassest all Thy creatures. Behold me here, who have served Thee many years and have suffered on Thy account abundant tribulations and with hearty good will have given myself up to Thee alone. If for a quarter of the time I have served Thee I had served a tyrant, he would have shown me some sign of benevolence, were it only one kind word, one kind look, one smile; but Thou, O Lord, hast never given me any good cheer nor have I received of Thee the least favor of those which Thou art wont to do to others. Thou being sweetness itself, why art Thou to me harder than a hundred tyrants? What is this, Lord? Why wishest Thou me to suffer thus?"

At this point there came a crash as if the whole church were coming down, and in the roof there was a fearful din, as though thousands of dogs with their teeth were crunching up the woodwork. He was amazed and troubled with fear, and turning his head to see what was the matter, he saw behind him the most foul and horrible vision in the world, a devil who held a bar of iron in his hand, where-with he gave him a great blow on the body. Whereupon he fell to the ground and could not rise, but plucked up heart to crawl as far as an altar that was near, unable to manage himself for sheer pain, as though all his bones were out of joint for blows. When the friars rose for prime, they found him as one dead, without knowing the cause of so sudden and fatal an accident. They carried him to the infirmary, where for three whole weeks he lay in severe pain. So great was the stench, so filthy and nauseous, that the religious could nowise come in to attend to him without first stopping their noses, and taking many other precautions. At the end of that time he gathered some strength and was able to stand on his feet, whereupon he sought to cure himself of his foolish presumption and pride. Accordingly, returning to the place where he had committed the fault, he sought there the remedy of it, and with many tears and great humility he made his prayer, very different from the former. He confessed his fault, acknowledging himself unworthy of any good and very deserving of pain and chastisement. And the Lord comforted him with a voice from heaven, which said: "If thou wantest consolation and sweetness, it is right for thee to be humble; acknowledge thy lowliness, and understand that thou art viler than dust and of less value than the worms under thy feet." Thereby he learned a great lesson, and henceforth was a most perfect religious.

Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read a very different story. It is told in his Life that, looking at his faults and bewailing them, he said that he wished that in punish-

ment of them the Lord would some time deprive him of the delight of His consolations, that this check might make him more careful and watchful in His service; but that such was the mercy of the Lord and the abundance of the sweetness and gentleness of His grace in dealing with him that, the more faults he fell into and the more he desired to be treated in this manner, the greater was the kindness of the Lord towards him and the greater the abundance in which He showered down upon him the treasures of His liberality. And so he said that he believed there was not a man in the world in whom these two things met as they did in himself; such unfaithfulness to God in the first place, and on the other side the reception of so many great and continual favors from His hand.

Blosius relates of a servant of God that the Lord did him great favors, consoling and illuminating him and showing him marvelous things in prayer; and he with much humility, and desire still further to please God, asked Him, if that would be to His service and better pleasure, to withdraw from him this grace. God heard his prayer, and withdrew it for five years, leaving him to suffer many temptations, desolations, and anguishes. One day, when he was weeping bitterly, two angels appeared to him and offered to console him; to whom he replied: "I do not ask for consolation; it is consolation enough for me that the will of God is accomplished in me."

The same Blosius relates that Christ our Redeemer said to St. Bridget: "Daughter, why art thou troubled and anxious?" She answered: "Because I am afflicted with useless and evil thoughts and cannot shake them off, and they cause me great anxiety about Thy dreadful judgment." Then the Lord said: "This is true justice, that as thou didst take delight in the vanities of the world against My will, so now thou shouldst be molested with a variety of painful and perverse thoughts against thy will. Nevertheless, thou shouldst fear My judgment with moderation and

discretion, confiding firmly and continually in Me that I am thy God; for thou oughtest to hold it for a most certain truth that the evil thoughts which a man resists and rejects are a purgatory, and a crown for his soul. If thou canst not hinder them, suffer them with patience, and protest against them with thy will. And though thou consent not to them, still, for all that, fear lest pride come over thee on that account and bring thee to a fall; because whoever stands, it is only the grace of God that holds him up."

Blosius in his book on "Comfort for the Pusillanimous," quotes from Tauler: "Many, when they are harassed by tribulation, are wont to say to me: 'Father, I am in a bad way, I am not getting on well, I am worn out with various troubles and melancholy.' In reply to him who says this, I tell him that he is going on all right and meriting a great reward. Then they say: 'Sir, it is not so; on the contrary, I believe this comes of my faults.' On that I say to them: 'Whether it comes of your sins or not, believe that God has put upon you this cross, and thank Him for it; suffer and be entirely resigned.' Still they say: 'Interiorly, I am a prey to great dryness and darkness.' I say: 'My dear child, suffer with patience and you will gain more merit thereby than if you were borne along on a flood of sensible devotion.'"

It is related of a great servant of God that he said: "For forty years I have served our Lord and practised meditation, and never have I found in it any relish or consolation; nevertheless, on the day on which I practise it, I find in myself great support for exercises of virtue; but when I fail in it, I feel so weak that I cannot stir a feather to fly to anything good."

CHAPTER XXX

*Of Conformity to the Will of God in the Distribution of
Virtues and Supernatural Gifts*

AS we must be conformable to the will of God in whatever manner He pleases to treat us in prayer, so also in regard of all other virtues and gifts and spiritual advantages. It is a very good thing to desire all virtues and sigh after them and strive to attain them, but in our desire for improvement and growth and progress in virtue we must possess our souls in peace if we do not attain our desire. If God will not give you the chastity of an angel, but you suffer grave temptations in that matter, it is better for you to keep your patience and conformity to the will of God than go about worrying and complaining that you fall short of the purity of the angels. If God is not ready to give you such a meekness as He gave a Moses and a David, or such patience as He gave a Job, but you feel stirrings and promptings to the contrary, it is well for you to be ashamed and humbled, and thence take occasion to set little store by yourself; but it is not well for you to lose your peace of mind and be full of worries and complaints that God has not made you as patient as a Job or as humble as a St. Francis. We needs must conform ourselves to the will of God in these things, for we never shall find peace otherwise. Father Master Avila says very well: "I do not believe that there ever was a saint in this world who did not desire to be better than he was; but that did not rob them of their peace, for their desire was not prompted by selfish greed, which never says, 'Enough,' but by God, with Whose distribution they were content. Although He gave them little, they would have been content even with less, taking it for the part of true love to be content with what was given them rather than desire more, despite all the whisperings of

self-love pretending that such desire was for the better service of God."

But someone will say that this is tantamount to saying that we ought not to be fervent in desire to be more and more virtuous and better, but leave all to God, soul as well as body; and so apparently we should give occasion to tepidity and weakness, caring nothing to grow and go forward. Be this point well noted, since it is of great importance. It is a very good reply and objection, so good that beyond this there is nothing else to fear in the matter. *There is no doctrine, however good it be, that may not be abused, if you do not know how to apply it properly.* So this may be abused in its bearing on prayer and on other virtues and spiritual gifts; wherefore a good explanation and right understanding is here necessary.

I do not say that we should not desire to be holier every day, and strive ever to imitate what is better, and be diligent and fervent in doing so; for that is what we came into religion for; and if we do not do that, we shall not be good religious. In exterior things men should be diligent without fretting and complaining. So say the saints, and so Christ our Redeemer lays down His prohibition in the Gospel: *I tell you, be not solicitous for your life, what ye shall eat, nor for your body what ye shall put on* (Matt. vi. 25), reprehending excessive solicitude and anxiety and greediness in these things, but not relieving us of proper care and diligence about them, but rather commanding us to have it and giving it to us for penance: *In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread* (Gen. iii. 19). It is necessary, in fact, that men should labor and be diligent to get their food, and to do otherwise would be tempting God. So in the same way must it be in spiritual things and in the striving after virtues and gifts of God. Bound as we are to be very diligent and careful in this endeavor, still it must be done in such a way as not to part with our peace of soul and conformity to the will of God. Do what is to be done

on your part; but if after all you see that you are not so successful as you wished, you must not fall into impatience, which would be worse than the original fault, not even though the failure seems to have been due to your own faint-heartedness, a thing that is apt to discourage many. Take care to make honest efforts; and if they are not all successful and you fall into some faults, do not be amazed at that, nor lose heart; such are we all! I am a man and not an angel; weak, not consummate in sanctity. God knows well our weakness and our misery. *He knoweth the clay of which we are made* (Psalm cii. 13), and wishes us not to be discouraged at our faults, but to repent and humble ourselves, and rise again at once, and ask for more strength of the Lord, and take care to go contented both inwardly and outwardly. It is more to the point that you should rise at once, with cheerfulness which doubles your strength for the service of God, than that, thinking to bewail your sins for God's sake, you should displease that same God by serving Him badly with drooping heart and drooping wings and other evil features that are wont to take rise from thence.

The only thing to fear here is the danger that we have touched upon of tepidity gaining entrance upon us, and our omitting to do what is on our part under color of saying: "God must give it me; all must come from the hand of God; I can do no more." We must be on our guard against the same danger in what we were saying of prayer; we must take care that sloth does not impose upon us here either under this pretense. But once this side door is closed, and you are honestly doing what it rests with you to do, God is more pleased with patience and humility in your weaknesses than with those fits of unmeasured anguish and sadness which some fall into at the thought that they are not growing in virtue and perfection as they would wish, nor find the facility in prayer which they would desire. This business of prayer and perfection is not done

by grumblings and fisticuffs, but by God's giving it to whom He will, and as He wills, and in such time as He pleases. It is certain that not all are to be equal who are to go to heaven, nor must we despair because we are none of the best who go there, nor perhaps even of the middling good; but we must fall in with the will of God in all and return thanks to our Lord that He holds out to us hope of finding salvation by His mercy. And if we do not succeed in being without faults, let us give thanks to God that He gives us a knowledge of our shortcomings; and seeing that we are not going to heaven by the high path of virtues, as some go, let us be content to travel by knowledge of our sins and sorrow for them, as many go.

St. Jerome says: "Let others offer in the temple of the Lord, each according to his ability; some gold, silver, and precious stones; others silks, crimson, purple, and embroidery. Enough for me to offer in the temple skins of goats and hides of animals." Let others, then, offer to God their virtues and heroic and excellent acts and their high and lofty contemplations; enough for me to offer to God my lowliness, knowing myself and acknowledging myself a sinner, imperfect and evil, and presenting myself before His Majesty as one poor and needy. And it is well to rejoice for this at heart, and give thanks to God that He does not deprive us of this also which He has given us, as He does to men who have utterly lost His favor.

St. Bonaventure, Gerson, and others add here a remark which goes far to confirm what has been said. They say that many persons serve God better for not having the virtue and recollection that they desire than they would do if they had it. As they are, they live in humility and walk with care and diligence, endeavoring to mount and go forward, and having frequent recourse to God; but the other way they would possibly become proud, negligent, and tepid in the service of God, thinking that they had already got all that they need have, and would have no mind to labor

for more. Be this said to the end that we may honestly do what lies in our power, and walk with diligence and care aiming at perfection; and then let us be satisfied with what the Lord gives us and not be disconsolate or in distress about what we cannot gain and what is not in our power. That would be, as Father Master Avila well says, like being in pain because they did not give us wings to fly through the air.

CHAPTER XXXI

Of the Conformity That We Should Have to the Will of God As Regards the Good Things of Heavenly Glory

NOT only in the good things of grace, but also in the good things of heavenly glory, we should conform ourselves to the will of God. The true servant of God should be so detached from his own interests, even in these things, as to rejoice more because the will of God is fulfilled in him than in all else that could interest him. "It is great perfection not to seek one's own interest in anything, either little or great, either in temporal or in eternal, because Thy will, O Lord, and the love of Thy honor ought to overtop all things, and we ought to find more consolation and contentment in that than in all benefits received or receivable" (A Kempis). This is the contentment and joy of the blessed. The saints in heaven rejoice more in the fulfilment of the will of God than in the greatness of their own glory. They are so transformed into God and so united to His will, that the glory that they enjoy and the happy lot that has fallen to them they do not welcome so much for the advantage that they bring them and the satisfaction which they receive as because God is pleased thereby and such is the will of God. Hence it comes to be that each of them is so contented and delighted with the degree that he holds as not to desire any more, nor is he in any way pained that

another has more; because, seeing God, the soul is so transformed into Him as to cease to will as herself and begin to will as God; and as she sees that this is the satisfaction and good pleasure of God, so it is also her joy and her satisfaction.

This is the perfection that we see shine forth in those great saints, in a Moses, in a St. Paul, who for the salvation of souls and the greater glory of God seemingly forgot themselves and took no account of their own glory. *Lord, pardon this people or blot me out from thy own book*, said Moses to God (Exod. xxxii. 31-32); and St. Paul: *I desired to be anathema from Christ for the sake of my brethren* (Rom. ix. 3). From him afterwards a St. Martin and other saints learned: "If still I am necessary to Thy people, I refuse not labor." They postponed their rest and willingly ceded something of that glorious reward which they were now so near, and offered themselves anew to labor for the greater service and glory of God. This is doing the will of God here on earth as it is done in heaven, wholly to forget our own interest, and place all our satisfaction in doing the will of God, and count and hold the pleasing of God more than our own advancement and the possession of heaven and earth.

Here is well seen the perfection that this exercise of conformity to the will of God asks of us. If we are to withdraw our eyes from our interest in spiritual goods, and even from eternal goods and the glory of heaven itself, to fix them on the satisfaction and will of God, how shall it be with other interests and human considerations? Hence it will be understood how far from this perfection he is who makes a difficulty of conforming himself to the will of God in those things of which we spoke at the beginning; of being in this place or that, in this office or in another, of being in good health or in sickness, of being made little of or much of by others. We were just saying that we must make more account of the will and satisfaction of God than

of all the gains that can possibly be made in spiritual and even in eternal goods; and are you boggling over these things that in respect of them are mere ordure! To him who desires so much the satisfaction of God and the fulfilment of His divine will that he willingly cedes his own glory and is content with the lowest place, not because he is wanting in desire of work and doing doughty deeds, but only to seek better the satisfaction and good pleasure of God, all other things will be very easy, since he makes the renunciation and cession of the highest thing that can be renounced for the love of God. This is the utmost renunciation that man can make to conform himself to the will of God, when he says: "If God would have me die this instant and suffer diminution of glory thereby, I would rather have that lot than die twenty or thirty years hence and so obtain much greater glory; and if, on the other hand, by dying now I could make sure of my glory, still, if God would rather have me do and suffer for many years in this place of imprisonment and exile, I prefer that above immediate admission to the glory of the blessed; for my joy and glory is the satisfaction of God and the fulfilment of His will. *Thou art my glory and the lifter up of my head* (Psalm iii. 4)."

Of our blessed Father Ignatius there is related a rare example of this. One day, being in company with Father Master Lainez and others, on some point that was raised he put them this question: "Tell me, Master Lainez, what you would do if God made you this offer and said: 'If you wish to die now, I will draw you out of the prison of this body and give you eternal glory; whereas, if you wish to go on living, I give you no assurance what is to become of you, but leave you to take your chance. If you live and persevere in virtue, I will give you your reward; but if you fall away from good, I will judge you as I find you.' Now, if our Lord said this to you, and you understood that by remaining some time in this life you could render some

great and notable service to His Divine Majesty, what would you choose?" Father Lainez answered: "For myself, Father, I acknowledge to your reverence that I would choose to go at once to the enjoyment of God and make sure of my salvation and deliver myself from danger in a matter of such importance." Then said our holy Father: "Well, I certainly should not do so; but if I judged that by remaining in the world I could render some special service to our Lord, I would beg Him to leave me in it till the work was done; I would fix my eyes on that work, and not on myself, taking no account of my own danger or my own security." And he did not think that thereby he was endangering his own salvation, but rather rendering it more certain and more splendid for having trusted God and stayed here on earth in His service. "For what king or prince is there in the world," said he, "who, if he offered his courtier some great emolument, and the courtier declined the present enjoyment of that emolument in order to be able to render some notable service to his master, would not hold himself bound to keep and augment that reward for that courtier, since he was depriving himself of it for his love and to serve him better? Now if men act so, who are ungrateful and thankless, what are we to expect of the Lord, Who so forestalls us with His grace and does us so many favors? How could we fear that He would desert us and let us fall for having put off our own blessedness and given up the enjoyment of it for His sake? That cannot be believed or feared of such a Lord."

CHAPTER XXXII

Of Conformity and Union and Perfect Love for God, and How We Should Practise This Exercise

FOR the better seeing of the perfection and great excellence contained in this exercise of conformity with the will of God, and that we may know how far we can attain

to it, by way of conclusion and termination of this treatise we will say a little about a very high exercise of the love of God which the saints and masters of the spiritual life put before us. And it seems to come in very well here, because, as St. Denis the Areopagite says, one of the principal effects of love is to unite the wills of them that love one another so that they concur in willing or not willing the same thing. Thus, the more united one is and the more conformed to the will of God, the greater will be one's love of God; and the greater that love, the greater the union and conformity with the will of God. To explain this it is necessary to mount up in thought to heaven, loving and conforming ourselves to the will of God. Have the same will with Him to take or refuse; for the nearer we approach to this, the more perfect will be our exercise. The glorious Apostle and Evangelist St. John says that the sight of God makes the blessed like unto Him: *When He shall appear, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is* (I John iii. 2). In seeing God, the blessed are so transformed into God as to have one will and one wish with Him. Let us see, then, what is the will and wish and love of God, for thereby we shall come to see what is the wish and will of the blessed, and thence we may gather what our wish and love and will should be to be perfect. The wish and will of God, and His highest and most perfect love, is of His own glory and of His own being, supremely perfect and glorious. This, then, is the wish and will and love of the blessed. Thus the love of the saints and blessed is a love and wish whereby they love and wish with all their strength that God should be what He is and be in Himself so good and glorious and worthy of honor as He is. And as they see in God all that they desire, then follows from that in them that *fruit of the Holy Ghost*, which the Apostle says is an unspeakable joy (Gal. v. 22), at seeing Him Whom they love so full of good things and treasures in Himself.

By what we see on earth we shall be able to get some inkling of the divine joy which the blessed hereby receive. See how great is the joy and gladness that a good son receives at seeing his dearly-loved father honored and sought after by all; learned, rich and powerful, and highly esteemed and cherished by the king. Certainly there are sons so good that they will say that there is nothing to compare with the joy that they receive at seeing their father made so much of. Now if this joy is so great on earth, where love is so weak and good things so mean, what must be the joy of the saints at seeing their true Lord and Creator and heavenly Father, into Whom they are so transformed by love, so good, so holy, so radiant in beauty, so infinitely powerful that all creation holds its being and its beauty solely of His will, and without that will not a leaf could stir on the tree! And, accordingly, the Apostle St. Paul says it is a joy so great as *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man* (I Cor. ii. 9). This is that *rushing river* which St. John in the Apocalypse saw coming forth from the throne of God and the Lamb (Apoc. xxii. 1), which *giveth joy to the City of God* (Psalm xlv. 5), whereof the blessed in heaven drink and, thereby inebriated with love, sing that everlasting Alleluia, glorifying and blessing God. *Alleluia, praised be the Lord, for now our Lord God omnipotent reigneth, let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory* (Apoc. xix. 6). They are praising and rejoicing at the great glory of God, giving Him congratulations and expressions of satisfaction, with great jubilation and rejoicing. *Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor and power and strength be to our Lord God for ever and ever* (Apoc. vii. 12).

This is the love which the saints bear to God in heaven and the conformity which they have to His divine will—to speak of such things as we can, considering the poor-ness of our understanding. This is what we should try to imitate in our way here on earth, that the will of God may

be done on earth as it is in heaven. *Look and do according to the pattern that I have shown thee on the mount*, said God to Moses (Exod. xxv. 40), when He bade him construct the Tabernacle. So we should do all things here on earth according to the plan that is carried out there on that high mountain of glory. We must set ourselves to loving and willing that which the blessed in heaven are loving and willing; and that which they are loving and willing is God Himself, Who is His own glory and His own being, sovereignly perfect and glorious.

That each one may be able to do this better for himself, we will set down here briefly the practice of this exercise. When you are at prayer, consider with the understanding the infinite being of God, His eternity, His omnipotence, His infinite wisdom, beauty, glory, and beatitude. Then use your will, rejoicing, delighting, and taking complacency and satisfaction in that God is what He is, that He is God, that the being and infinite good which He holds, He holds of Himself; that He has no need of anybody, and all have need of Him; that He is almighty and so good and so holy and so full of glory as in Himself He is.

St. Thomas and the theologians say that this is the greatest and most perfect act of the love of God. So it is also the highest and most consummate act of conformity to the will of God, because there is no greater nor more perfect love of God than that which God Himself bears to Himself, which is a love of His own glory and of His own sovereignly perfect and glorious being, nor can there be a better will than that. It follows that our love will be greater and more perfect in proportion as it is likened to this love wherewith God loves Himself, and the greater and more perfect will be our union and conformity with His divine will. And, further, philosophers say that to love another is to seek his good; whence it follows that the greater good we desire for another, the more we love him. Now the greatest good that we can seek for God is that which He

already has, which is His infinite being, His infinite goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, and glory. When we love any creature, we not only are pleased at any good thing that he has, but we are able to wish for him some other good thing which he has not, since every creature can grow; but coming to God, we cannot wish Him in Himself any good thing which He has not, since He is infinite on every side, and so He cannot have in Himself more power, nor more glory, nor more wisdom, nor more goodness than He has. And so the greatest good that we can wish God, and consequently the greatest love that we can bear Him, is to rejoice and be glad and feel complacency and satisfaction that God has all those good things that He has, and that He is so good as He is, so rich, so powerful, so infinite, and so glorious.

The saints who are in heaven, and the most sacred humanity of Christ our Redeemer, and the most glorious Virgin our Lady, and all the choirs of angels rejoice to see God so fair and beautiful and so laden with all fulness of good things. So great is the joy and gladness that they feel thereat that nothing will satisfy them but to break out into praises of this Lord, and they never have enough of praising and blessing Him for ever and ever, as the prophet says: *Blessed are they who dwell in thy house, O Lord, they shall praise thee world without end* (Psalm lxxxiii. 5). In like manner we should unite our hearts and lift up our voices with theirs, as Mother Church teaches us: "Deign, O Lord, to admit our voices also, along with those of all the angels and blessed, crying out to Thee in suppliant acknowledgment, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts; the heavens and earth are full of Thy glory.'" Always, or as continually as is in our power, we ought to occupy ourselves in praising and glorifying God, exulting and rejoicing in the good and glory and sovereignty that He enjoys, and giving Him congratulations and felicitations thereupon. In this manner we shall liken ourselves here, in our poor way, to the blessed in heaven and even to God Himself, and we

shall exercise the highest love and the most perfect conformity to the will of God that we possibly can exercise.

CHAPTER XXXIII

How Much This Exercise Is Recommended and Repeated in Holy Scripture

BY the extent to which Holy Scripture recommends and repeats this exercise, we may well understand its value, excellence, and how pleasing it is to God, and at the same time we can take thence matter to practise it and occupy ourselves further therein. The Royal Prophet in the Psalms at every step invites us to this exercise, saying: *Be glad and exult, ye just, in the Lord, and glory all ye right of heart. Exult, ye just, in the Lord. Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee thy heart's desires* (Psalm xxxi. 11; xxxii. 1; xxxvi. 4), or, to say better, what thou desirest and hast need of. This is a prayer in which you ask without asking, and God hears the desires of your heart. The Apostle St. Paul, writing to the Philippians, says: *Rejoice in the Lord always*. And thinking that this was not an advice to be given once only, he repeats it: *Again I say, rejoice* (Phil. iv. 4). This is the joy with which the most holy Virgin rejoiced, when she said: *And my spirit hath exulted in God my Savior* (Luke i. 47). With this joy also Christ our Redeemer rejoiced, as the Gospel says: *He exulted in the Holy Ghost* (Luke x. 21). And the Prophet David says that so great was the joy and gladness which his soul experienced in considering the greatness of the excellence and glory of God, and what fit matter it furnishes to all for rejoicing in the infinite good that God enjoys, that the joy redounded abundantly even upon his body, and his very flesh was kindled with love of God: *My heart and my flesh have exulted in the living God* (Psalm lxxxiii. 2). And elsewhere he says: *My soul shall*

exult in the Lord, and take delight in God her Savior: all my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? (Psalm xxxiv. 9-10). And because this love is a thing so divine and heavenly, the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, at the beginning of the canonical hours, commencing matins, invites us in the invitatory to love the Lord in this manner, being glad and rejoicing in His infinite excellences, taking it from Psalm xciv. 1, 3-4: *Come let us rejoice in the Lord, let us utter a cry of joy before God our Savior: let us come before His face with praise, and make to Him a joyful sound of psalms: for the Lord is a great God, and a great king above all gods: for the sea is His, and He made it, and His hands planted the dry land.* And for the same reason and to the same effect the Church puts at the end of all the psalms *Gloria Patri*. This is that entry into the joy of God which Christ our Redeemer speaks of in the Gospel: *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord* (Matt. xxv. 21)—to share in the infinite joy of God, and be taken up with rejoicing and exulting along with God Himself in His glory and beauty and infinite riches.

To incite us more to this exercise and cause us constantly to advance in this joy and exultation, it will aid us much to consider how good and beautiful and glorious God is. So beautiful is He that the bare sight of Him renders those who see Him blessed; and if those who are in hell were to come to see God, all their pains would cease and they would pass from hell to paradise. *This is life everlasting, to know thee, the one true God* (John xvii. 3). In this consists the glory of the saints, in seeing God. This is what makes them blessed, and that, not for one day or one year, but forever, because never can they be sated or weary with looking upon God, but they shall always find new joy therein, as the Apocalypse (xiv. 3) says: *And they sang as it were a new song.* Herein it seems that the goodness, beauty, and infinite perfection of God are sufficiently declared; but there is more still that may be added, and

plenty more still. God is so beautiful and glorious that, in seeing Himself, God finds His happiness. The glory and beatitude of God is in seeing and loving Himself. See if we are not right in delighting and rejoicing in a goodness and beauty so great as to make glad the whole of that City of God, and render all its citizens blessed, and God Himself also blessed in knowing and loving Himself.

CHAPTER XXXIV

How We May Further Extend This Exercise

WE may also familiarize ourselves with this exercise and extend it further by exercising this love on the sacred humanity of Christ our Lord, considering its dignity and great perfection, and taking complacency and delight in it, being glad and rejoicing within ourselves that this most blessed humanity is so elevated and united with the Divine Person, so full of grace and glory, as to be the instrument of the Divinity in working such excellent works as are the sanctification and glorification of all the elect, and all supernatural gifts and graces that are communicated to men; and finally being glad and rejoicing at all that belongs to the perfection and glory of that most glorious soul and that most holy body of Christ our Redeemer, dwelling thereon with affectionate love and gladness in the way that saints consider the most holy Queen of Angels rejoiced on the day of the Resurrection, when she saw her most blessed Son so triumphant and glorious; and as Holy Writ tells us of the patriarch Joseph when he heard tell that his son was alive and was lord of all the land of Egypt. So great was his joy that his spirit revived, and he said: *Enough for me that my son Joseph liveth: I want no more than to see him, and with that I shall die content* (Gen. xlv. 28).

We may make this same exercise on the glory of our Lady and of other saints. It will be an excellent devotion

on their feast days to spend some part of our meditation on this exercise. It will be one of the best homages that we can pay them, since the greatest love of which we are capable is to desire for them the greatest good of which they are capable, rejoicing and being glad at their so great glory and offering them our congratulations on the same. The Church assigns this exercise for the Feast of the Assumption of our Lady: "Today the Virgin Mary ascends to heaven: let us rejoice because she reigns with Christ forever." And at the commencement of Mass on this feast and many others she invites us to this exercise, animating us by the example of the angels who take part in it. "Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating this feast in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at whose Assumption the angels rejoice and unite in praising the Son of God." There is another gain and advantage in this exercise regarding the saints, and particularly regarding the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord, and it is that hence we come little by little to rise in our exercises and gain access to the Divinity; for, as Christ Himself says, He is the way and gate whereby to enter in to the Father (John x. 7; xiv. 6).

In this exercise also, which concerns itself with God as God, there are degrees, and we may familiarize ourselves more with it by coming down to things of earth. For though it is true that God cannot be augmented in Himself, seeing that He is infinite, and so we cannot wish Him in Himself any good that He has not got; yet God may be augmented externally in His creatures; that is, He may be more known and loved and glorified by them. When our soul considers at meditation how worthy God is to be loved and served by His creatures, we may occupy ourselves in wishing and desiring that all souls, created and to be created, should know Him, love Him, praise and glorify Him in all things. Would, O Lord, that we could convert all the infidels and sinners that there are in the world, and bring it about that none should offend Thee and all should obey

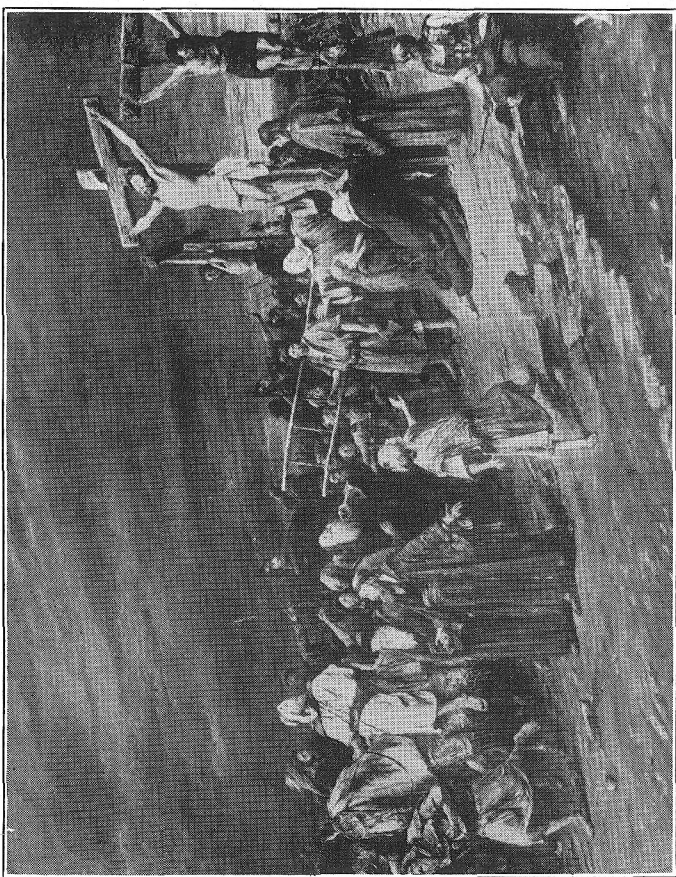
and employ themselves in Thy service now and for ever and ever! *Hallowed be thy name: let all the earth adore thee, and celebrate thee, and sing canticles to thy name* (Matt. vi. 9; Psalm lxxv. 4). And thus we may go on to think of a thousand sorts of service that creatures might pay God, and desire them to be so paid.

Hence each one should descend to desiring and endeavoring to do the will of God and work for His greater glory in what relates to himself, contriving ever to do that which he takes to be the will of God and His greater glory, ascending to what Christ our Redeemer says of Himself in the Gospel: *I ever do what is pleasing to my Father* (John viii. 29). For, as the Evangelist St. John says: *He who sayeth that he knoweth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar: but whoever keepeth his word, in him the charity of God is perfect* (I John ii. 4-5). He who says that he knows and loves God, but does not do His will, is not telling the truth; he lies. But he who keeps the commandments and does the will of God, he has perfect charity and love of God. Hence, to love God and live in entire conformity to His will, it is not enough for a man to take complacency in the perfections of God and to wish all the rest of creation to love and glorify God, but the man himself must offer and dedicate himself entirely to fulfilling the will of God. For how can anyone say with truth that he desires the greater glory of God when in what he can, and in what lies in his power, he does not seek to procure it? This is the love that the soul exercises herself in when at meditation she forms resolutions and true desires to accomplish the will of God in this thing and in that thing and in all the rest that offers. This is the exercise which we are ordinarily wont to go through at meditation.

Hereby we have opened out a great field where we can occupy ourselves for a long time at meditation in this exercise, and we have set forth the great profit and perfection there is in it. It only remains now for us to set to work

and begin to make trial here upon earth of that which we are to practise afterwards to such good effect in heaven. *The fire of God burneth in Sion, and the furnace thereof is forever kindled in Jerusalem* (Isaias xxxi. 9). Here there must begin to be enkindled in our hearts this fire of the love of God; but the flames, the height and perfection, shall be in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is glory.

**PRACTICE OF PERFECTION
AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**



THE CRUCIFIXION

PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

By

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

of the Society of Jesus

Newly Translated from the Original Spanish

By

JOSEPH RICKABY

of the Same Society

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ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

to

THE READER*

Though this work is composed principally for religious, yet it is very useful to all Christians; and this second part, in particular, is so disposed as to be of very great advantage to all secular persons who desire to give themselves entirely to God's service. For their first duty is to subdue their hearts by mortifying their passions, by subjecting their senses (especially their tongue), and by humbling themselves before God, in order that those virtues and good works which they have planted in their souls may spring up and bring forth such fruit as should be expected. It is for this reason that I treat first of mortification, then of modesty and silence, and afterwards of humility; which are the virtues a Christian ought chiefly practise in the beginning of his conversion. And because the Holy Ghost would have those that enter into God's service remain in fear and prepare themselves for temptation, I therefore speak in the Fourth Treatise of the profit and advantage of temptations, and point out the means of overcoming them. In the Fifth and Sixth Treatises I show the obstacles that occur in the paths of virtue, and of how great advantage it is to walk always in these paths with joy and liberty. And, because nothing can better produce this effect than the knowledge of the infinite treasure we possess in Jesus Christ, I make that the subject of the Seventh Treatise; in which I also show how we are to meditate on the mysteries of the Passion and what fruit we are to reap from them. Lastly, I

*Taken from the American edition of 1839.

conclude this second part with a treatise on Holy Communion, in which I show what we are to do in order to prepare ourselves for it and to render it profitable to us; all which I endeavor to treat of as methodically as possible, that the practice may be more easy; which is the chief aim I had in this whole work. If the Christian reader vouchsafes favorably to receive it, I hope, by the assistance of God's grace, that it will help him to subdue his passions, to practise modesty and moderation in all his words and actions, to overcome temptations, to make his profit of the immense treasures with which the Passion of Jesus Christ has enriched the faithful, to receive His body and blood with pious fervor, and to gather and lay up such fruit as may conduce to his everlasting happiness and salvation.

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NINTH TREATISE



CHAPTER I

That We Must Join Mortification to Prayer, and That These Two Things Must Help One Another

IT is good to join prayer to fasting, said the angel Raphael to Toby when he made himself known unto him (Tob. xii. 8). The holy Fathers by "fasting" commonly understand whatsoever belongs to penance and mortification of the flesh; and accordingly they consider mortification and prayer as the two principal means we have to advance in perfection, and which ought accordingly to be inseparable companions. St. Bernard upon the words of the Canticle: *Who is she that ascends by the desert like a wreath of smoke composed of divers aromatic spices of myrrh and incense, diffusing its odor around?* (Cant. iii. 6) says that myrrh and incense, which are the symbols of mortification and prayer, ought always to accompany us; it is by them we must raise ourselves to the height of perfection and render ourselves a sweet-smelling odor before the throne of God; for the one is of little or no profit to us without the other. For he who only mortifies his flesh without humbling his flesh and does not lay himself out for prayer, becomes proud and deserves to have these words of the prophet applied unto him: *Shall I feed upon the flesh of bulls? Or shall I drink the blood of goats?* (Psalm xlix. 13). These sacrifices of flesh and blood alone are not pleasing unto God. And on the other hand, he who gives himself to prayer and forgets mortification shall hear what Christ our Redeemer says in the Gospel: *Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not what I tell you?* (Luke vi. 46), and also that of the Wise Man, saying: *If anyone turneth his ears from hearkening to the law, his prayer shall be rejected as execrable* (Prov. xxviii. 9). Your prayer will not be pleasing to God if you do not put into action His

will. St. Augustine says that, as there were two altars in the Temple of Solomon, the one without, where they slew the victims they were to sacrifice, and the other within the Holy of Holies, upon which they offered incense composed of various aromatic spices; so there must also be two altars in us, the one interior in the heart to offer to Him the incense of prayer, according to those words of St. Matthew: *But when thou wouldst pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret* (Matt. vi. 6), the other exterior in the body, which must be by mortification. Thus mortification and prayer march hand in hand together; for if mortification be a necessary disposition to prayer, prayer is also the means to arrive at perfect mortification.

As to the first point, that mortification is a necessary disposition to prayer, it is a truth that all saints and masters of the spiritual life teach us. They say that, as we cannot write upon a skin of parchment if it be not well and evenly scraped and all the flesh taken off, so if the affections and bad inclinations of the flesh be not rooted out of our soul, it has not the disposition it ought to have for our Lord to write and imprint upon it the characters of His grace and wisdom. *To whom will God teach knowledge,* says the Prophet Isaias, *and to whom will he give ears and understanding to understand his secrets? To them that are weaned from milk and put away from the breast* (Isaias xxviii. 9); that is to say, to those who for His love have removed and weaned themselves from the comforts and pleasures of the world and the appetites and desires of the flesh. To enter into our heart, God looks for quiet and repose and much peace and stillness in our soul. *His abode is made in peace* (Psalm lxxv. 3). Even pagan philosophers understood this; they all acknowledged that for our soul to become wise it must first be quiet and tranquil, which is when the passions and appetites are mortified and still, a time when there are no violent passions with their

disorderly motions to trouble the peace of the soul and blind the eyes of reason, as the passions do when they are excited. It is proper to passion to blind the reason and diminish the liberty of our free will. You see it in a man in a fit of temper, how his anger deprives him of his judgment and makes him look like a lunatic and a madman. If you ask him: "How came you to say or do this?" he answers, "I was not in my right mind." But when the passions are mortified and still, the understanding is left clear to discern what is good, and the will more free to embrace it, and in this way a man comes to make himself wise and virtuous. Now God our Lord also requires this peace and quiet to repose in a soul and pour into it His wisdom and divine gifts; and the means to find this peace is mortification of our passions and disorderly appetites, and so Isaias calls it the fruit and effect of justice. *And the work of justice shall be peace* (Isaias xxxii. 17). St. Augustine explains this very well in that saying of the prophet, *Justice and peace have kissed* (Psalm lxxxiv. 11). "You seek peace without doing justice; do justice and you shall find peace. These two things are so united, so closely intertwined with one another, that the one cannot go without the other. If you love not justice, peace will not love you nor come to you"—*Fac iustitiam et habebis pacem, ut osculentur se iustitia et pax. Si non amaveris iustitiam, pacem non habebis, quia duae amicae sunt iustitia et pax, ipsae se osculantur: si amicam iustitiam non amaveris, non te amabit pax nec veniet ad te.* Peace is obtained by war. If you have no mind to make war on yourself by mortifying, contradicting, and overcoming yourself, you will never acquire that peace which is so necessary for prayer. "What hinders and troubles thee more," says that holy man (Å Kempis) than the unmortified affection of thy heart?" These passions, these appetites and evil inclinations that you have, disturb you at prayer and will not let you make way in it; that it is that troubles you therein; that it is

that disturbs you at it and makes such a din and racket in your soul as to awaken you from that sweet sleep—or, rather, never let you enter into the repose of it.

When a man has eaten to excess at supper, he cannot sleep nor be quiet at night because of the indigestions and gross vapors that arise in him, which vex him in such a way that he goes turning over from one side to another without being able to lie still. The same happens at meditation. Our heart is laden and weighed down by reason of disorderly self-love, of our craving to gratify our appetites, of our desire to be regarded and esteemed, of our great eagerness for the accomplishment of our own will—all which things so cumber the heart and raise in it such vapors, such figures and representations, as to leave no room for recollection and gathering up of the soul in God. So they explain what Christ our Lord says in the Gospel: *Look to it that your hearts be not overcharged with gluttony and drunkenness and the cares of this life* (Luke xxi. 34), which is to be understood not only of the drunkenness that comes of wine, but of all other things of this world, according to the word of the Prophet Isaias: *Listen, thou drunkard, drunk not with wine* (Isaias li. 21). Out of an unmortified heart there arises a thick cloud that bars and banishes the presence of God in the soul. And this is what the Apostle St. Paul says: *The animal man perceiveth not nor understandeth the things of the Spirit of God* (I Cor. ii. 14), because they are too delicate, and he too gross and material. Thus it is needful to reduce and attenuate oneself by mortification.

Hence will be understood the solution of a considerable doubt: How is it that, prayer being on the one hand a thing so sweet and luscious—praying being to converse and deal with God, *whose conversation hath no bitterness nor his company any tediousness, but great joy and gladness* (Wisdom viii. 16)—and being on the other hand so profitable and necessary, nevertheless it becomes to us so difficult, and

we go to it with such reluctance, and so few are given to prayer? St. Bonaventure says: "There are some at prayer as it were by force, like puppies tied to a stake." The reason is what we have been saying. Prayer of itself is not difficult, but mortification is, and much so, and mortification is the necessary disposition for prayer; and because we have not this disposition, therefore prayer becomes to us so laborious and difficult. We see here in the natural order that the difficulty is not in introducing what Schoolmen call the *form*, but in disposing the subject to receive it. Otherwise, see in a green log the work that it takes for the fire to get the greenness out of it, the volume of smoke that arises, the time that is needed to dispose it; but once it is disposed, the fire enters in as into its own home without any difficulty. So in our own case, the difficulty is in getting rid of the thick smoke of our passions, in mortifying our disorderly appetites, in uprooting and detaching ourselves from the things of earth; once that is done, the mind will go to God with great facility and alacrity and enjoy dealing and conversing with Him. Every man enjoys conversing and dealing with his like; and so the mortified man, as being now spiritualized and likened to God by mortification, enjoys conversing and dealing with God, and God also is glad to converse and deal with him. *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii. 31). But when a man is full of passions and disorderly appetites; when petty honor, petty affection, whim, amusement, and comfort have a hold on him, such a one feels much difficulty in conversing and dealing with God because he is very unlike God in character and enjoys dealing with company like himself about earthly and low things. *They have become abominable as the things they loved* (Osee ix. 10).

One of those holy Fathers used to say: As when water is troubled it is impossible to see your face in it, or anything else, so if the heart be not cleansed and purified from affections of earth which trouble and disturb it, and at rest

from vain and irrelevant cares, it cannot see the face of God in prayer, that is, the profoundness of His mysteries; nor will the Lord discover Himself to such. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God* (Matt. v. 8). Prayer is a spiritual view of the mysteries and works of God; and as to see well with the eyes of the body they must be kept clean and bright, so to see well the works of God with the eyes of the soul it is needful to keep the heart clean and bright. St. Augustine says: "Do you wish to see God? Think first of cleansing your heart, and whatever you see there that displeases God, take it away."

Abbot Isaac, as Cassian relates, used to illustrate this by a comparison. He used to say that our soul was like a very light feather, which, if not moistened or weighed down by anything else, but left pure and clean of all nastiness, at the slightest breath of air rises at once from the earth and goes fluttering here and there; but if it is wet or has any dirt adhering to it, that weight does not allow it to rise or mount on high, but keeps it down to earth and buried in the mud: so our soul, if it is pure and clean, rises at once and mounts up to God by the light, soft breeze of consideration and meditation; but if it is glued down and attached to the things of earth and laden with passions and disorderly appetites, these things weigh it down and keep it so oppressed as not to let it rise to the things of heaven or make a good meditation. The holy Abbot Nilus said: "If Moses was forbidden to approach the burning bush until he had taken off his shoes, how do you expect to arrive to see God, and treat with Him and converse with Him, being full of passions and affections for dead things?"

In the Fourth Book of Kings we have an example which shows well the peace and quiet we should have in our affections to enter into meditation and deal with God. When Joram, King of Israel, and Josaphat, King of Juda, and the King of Edom were on their way to fight the King of Moab, as they were on their march through the desert, the water

ran short and the whole army was perishing with thirst. Whereupon they went to consult the Prophet Eliseus; and the King of Israel, who was a bad man and an idolater, said to him: "How is this? Why has God gathered us three kings together here to deliver us over to the Moabites?" Eliseus replied: *What have I to do with thee? Go to the prophets of thy father and thy mother; as the Lord of Hosts liveth, in whose presence I stand, if it were not for my reverence for the presence of Josaphat, King of Juda, I would never have attended to thee, or looked at thee: but now bring me a musician* (IV Kings iii. 13-15). He rebuked him with zeal and holy anger, throwing in his teeth his sins and idolatries; but finally, out of regard for King Josaphat, who was a good and holy man, he was ready to declare the mercies which the Lord was about to show them on that expedition, giving them at once abundance of water and afterwards victory over their enemies. But because his indignation and zeal, although holy, had somewhat discomposed and troubled him, he bade them bring him a musician, and when he came, and he had been quieted and pacified by the music, he began to tell the wonders that the Lord intended to work on their behalf. But if after a good and holy outburst of emotion it was necessary for a saintly man to tranquilize and quiet himself to treat with God and receive His answer, what is to be said at such an outburst when it is not only not good, but imperfect and evil?

As for the second point, that prayer is a means to attain mortification, we have spoken of it at length in the treatise On Prayer, and it is also the fruit which we should gather from prayer, and any prayer that has not mortification for sister and companion the saints hold in suspicion. And with good reason; for as to forge a piece of ironwork it is not enough to soften it with fire, but it is necessary to form it by blows of the hammer to give it the figure that we desire, so it is not enough to soften our heart by the fire of meditation and devotion, if we do not finish

it off with the hammer of mortification to work our soul and clean it of the evil tendencies that it has and form it to the needful shapes of virtue. The delight of prayer and the sweetness of the love of God should facilitate the labor and difficulty there is in mortification, and thereby animate and strengthen us to deny our will and overcome the evil of our character. And we should not stop meditation until we attain by the grace of the Lord to this perfect mortification of our passions, of which we stand so much in need, and which the saints and all Holy Writ so much commend to us.

St. Augustine on that text of Genesis: *The child Isaac grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day of his weaning* (Gen. xxi. 8) asks why it is that Holy Scripture relates the birth of the child Isaac, that son of promise and desire in whom all nations were to be blessed, and there was no feasting over his birth; and says that they circumcised him on the eighth day, which was what the day of solemn baptism is with us, and yet here there was no feasting; and afterwards when they weaned him and put aloes on the breasts of the mother, and the child wept because it was taken away from the milk, then his father made high festival and a grand banquet. The saint says that we must refer it to some spiritual meaning to get the solution; and that what the Holy Ghost wishes us to understand hereby is that spiritual feasting and rejoicing should be when one grows and becomes a perfect man and is no longer one of those of whom the Apostle says: *As to babes, I gave you milk and not solid food* (I Cor. iii. 2). Applying this more to ourselves, what he wishes to say to us is this, that it is not matter of gladness and rejoicing to the order nor to our superiors, who are our spiritual fathers, when you are born in religion by entering there, nor when they receive you into it at the end of your novitiate, but when they see you weaned and ceasing to be a child, and you have no longer any taste for the dainties and amusements of children, but know how

to eat your bread, crumb and crust, and that they can treat you as a spiritual and mortified man.

Besides, meditation has another connection and particular relationship with mortification, inasmuch as it is not only a means to gain it, but is itself a great mortification of the flesh. So says Holy Writ by the Wise Man: *Virtuous watching will waste away the flesh* (Ecclus. xxxi. 1) : *Frequent meditation is an affliction of the flesh* (Eccles. xii. 12). This is also what Holy Scripture gives us to understand by the wrestling which the patriarch Jacob had all night with the angel, from whence we are told that he remained lame (Gen. xxxii. 32). And we see by experience that people who give themselves much to these mental exercises become weak, pale, and infirm, because such exercises are a blunt file that weakens and mortifies the flesh and wears away strength and health; and thus in every way meditation is a great aid to mortification.

CHAPTER II

In What Mortification Consists, and the Need in Which We Stand of It

TO go to the root of the matter we must presuppose in the first place that in our soul there are two chief parts, which theologians call the upper and the lower portions, or, in other and clearer words, reason and sensitive appetite. Before sin, in that blessed state of innocence and original justice in which God created man, this inferior portion was perfectly subject to the superior, appetite to reason, as the less noble to the more noble and the born slave to his master. *I found that God made man well ordered and right* (Eccles. vii. 30). God did not create man in that disordered condition in which we now are; but without any difficulty or contradiction, with much ease and facility, appetite obeyed reason, and man proceeded to love his Cre-

ator and employ himself wholly in His service with nothing to hinder or disturb him. The sensitive appetite was then so subject and submissive to reason that no reaction or temptation of the flesh could arise—unless the man himself freely sought it. We were not then tempted to anger, nor to envy, nor to gluttony, nor to lust, nor to any other evil desire unless we of our own will chose to entertain it. But as by sin man's reason rebelled against God, so also his sensitive appetite rebelled against reason. *I do not the good that I would do, but do the evil that I would not that I do*, says the Apostle Paul (Rom. vii. 19). Entirely against your will, and for all your dislike of it, there arise in your sensitive appetite motions and impulses contrary to reason.

And further, if man had not sinned, the body would have been disposed for any work that the soul chose to carry on, without feeling in itself any let or hindrance. But now *this body that is corrupt weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15). Of many things of which the soul feels herself capable and desirous, the body gets in the way. As when we go on a journey mounted on a sorry hack, that shakes our bones as we ride it, continually stumbles, gets tired, is unmanageable at times, starts at a shadow, and even takes to lying down unexpectedly, such at present is our body.

"This is the penalty of disobedience," says St. Augustine, "recoiling upon man himself, that whereas he has disobeyed God, now in turn he is not obeyed by himself."

Theologians say with Bede that by original sin man was "stripped of the gifts of grace, and wounded in those of nature"—*spoliatus gratuitis et vulneratus in naturalibus*. He was wounded and vitiated in his nature, inasmuch as his understanding was darkened for understanding the things of God; his free will weakened; his inclination for good enfeebled; his appetite headstrong for evil; his memory wild and wandering; his imagination restless and unquiet, so that we can scarcely recite one Our Father with

our thought fixed on God, but at once, almost before we are aware of it, it steals off and wanders from home and ranges without stopping all the world over. Our senses, again, are envious, our flesh filthy and ill-inclined; finally, our whole nature is so wounded and corrupted by sin that it does not take the course which it took before, nor can do now what it could before. He who before his sin loved God more than himself, now since his sin loves himself more than God; he is ever in love with himself, desirous of doing his own will, inclined to gratify his appetites and to let his passions and evil desires run away with him, even though they be against reason and against God.

Further, we must observe that, though by baptism we are delivered from original sin, which was the cause of this upset, nevertheless we are not delivered from this loss of control of our appetite and its rebellion against reason and against God, which theologians and saints call *fomes peccati*, the food and incentive to sin. God our Lord by His just and high judgment and arrangement has been pleased to leave in us this rebellion and contradiction to repress our pride, and in punishment for it, that we might always walk in humility, seeing our misery and vile condition. *When man was in honor he did not understand, but was likened to brute animals and made similar to them* (Psalm xlviii. 21). God created man in great honor and dignity, adorned him and beautified him with many supernatural gifts and graces, and he would not recognize what he had received nor be grateful for it. In consequence he deserved that God should despoil and deprive him of it and he should be left like the beasts, feeling in himself bestial desires and appetites, that he might know himself and be humbled and have no occasion for pride, as indeed we have none if we only know ourselves, but much ever to confound and humble us.

Secondly, we must lay down another main foundation in the matter, which follows from the first. It is that this appetite of ours, so irregular and disorderly—this evil and

perverse inclination of our flesh—is the greatest obstacle and hindrance to our making progress in the way of virtue. This is what we commonly say, that our flesh is our greatest enemy since thence arise all our temptations and falls, as the Apostle St. James says: *Whence are these wars and quarrels amongst you? Is it not from the lusts that war in your members?* (James iv. 1). This our sensuality and concupiscence, this disorderly self-love that we bear to ourselves, is the cause of all our wars, of all our sins, and of all the faults and imperfections that we fall into. And also this is the greatest difficulty that we find in the way of virtue. Even philosophers know this by the light of natural reason. Aristotle says that the whole difficulty of being a good and virtuous man lies in curbing and moderating pleasures and repugnances. Epictetus reduces the whole of philosophy to these two short words, *Endure and refrain*. And this is the experience of all; for no man sins except to escape some difficulty and hardship, or to gain some pleasure and delight instead of refraining from it. One man sins by love and desire of riches, another by greedy ambition of honor, another for the attainment of some fleshly and sensual pleasure, another to escape the difficulty and hardship there is in keeping the commandments of God and the Church, because he finds it very hard to love his enemy, to fast, to confess his shameful and secret sins. All sins spring from this source; and not only sins, but all faults and imperfections in the way of virtue.

Hereby it will be readily understood in what mortification consists; it consists in regulating what was irregular, in ordering and moderating our passions and evil inclinations and our disorderly self-love. In the words of Christ our Redeemer: *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me* (Matt. xvi. 24). St. Jerome says: "He denies himself and takes up his cross who before was unchaste and becomes now chaste and pure, who before was intemperate and becomes

now very abstemious, who was before timid and weak and becomes now strong and constant." That is to deny oneself, to make oneself other than one was before. And this is the need that we have of mortification. St. Basil adds: "Observe, He first says, *let him deny himself*, and then, *and follow me.*" If you do not first this duty of denying and breaking in your own will and mortifying your evil inclinations and passions, you will find many occasions and obstacles to hinder you from following Christ; you must first smooth and level the road by mortification. Therefore mortification is laid down as the foundation, not only of perfection, but of Christian life. This is the cross that we must always take up on our shoulders, if we wish to follow Christ—*ever bearing in our body the mortification of Jesus* (II Cor. iv. 10). This is what Job said: *Man's life is a warfare on earth* (Job vii. 1), because, as St. Paul says, *the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these two are contrary to one another* (Gal. v. 17).

This those glorious Fathers and doctors of the Church, Gregory and Ambrose, say is the true fortitude of the servants of God. It consists not in strength of the arms of the body, but in the virtue of the soul, in overcoming one's flesh, in contradicting one's appetites and desires, in despising the delights and satisfactions of this life, and in bearing well the hardships and adversities that occur. It is more to govern oneself and be master of one's passions and senses than to rule and subject others to oneself. *Better is the patient man than the strong, and better he that is master of his own mind than he that stormeth cities* (Prov. xvi. 32), for our own evil inclinations and passions are more serious foes than external enemies, as St. Ambrose says. And, speaking of the great power which Joseph attained, he says that he was great and did more in governing and being master of himself, not consenting to commit adultery with the lady of the house where he served (Gen. xxxix. 9), than

afterwards in ruling and governing the whole kingdom of Egypt. And St. Chrysostom says that David, in conquering and overcoming himself and not seeking to revenge himself on Saul (I Kings xviii. 6; xxiv. 7), whom he might have killed in the cave, did more than in overcoming the giant Goliath. The spoils of this victory he deposited, not in the city of the earthly Jerusalem, but in that Jerusalem above that is in heaven; and there came forth to meet him, singing his praises, not the women of Israel, as when he overcame Goliath, but the host of angels, rejoicing on high and marveling at his virtue and fortitude.

CHAPTER III

That One of the Greatest Chastisements of God Is to Give a Man Over to His Appetites and Desires, Abandoning Him So That He Goes After Them

BBETTER to understand the necessity we are under of mortifying our flesh and appetites and to animate us to take up arms against this enemy, it imports much to know what a great opposing power and enemy it is; so great that the saints say that one of the greatest chastisements of God, where He shows His anger most, is by giving over the sinner to the hands of this enemy, leaving him to his appetites and desires as in the hands of cruel executioners. They allege many passages of Holy Scripture, as that of the prophet: *My people did not hear my voice, and Israel did not attend to me, and I gave them over to follow the desires of their heart: they shall go their own ways* (Psalm lxxx. 12-13). And St. Paul, speaking of the heathen philosophers and their pride, says: *Knowing God, they did not glorify him as God, or render thanks, but became vain in their thought: therefore God gave them over to the desires of their heart, to uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies one with another* (Rom. i. 21-24). St. Ambrose takes notice

that this *giving over* on the part of God, of which we read in many places of Scripture, must not be understood as though God incited anyone to evil or made him fall into sin, but simply allowed those appetites and desires in them, which they had conceived in their heart, to come to birth; and so aided and egged on by the devil, they came to put them in execution.

What a great chastisement this is, is well seen by what follows from it. The Apostle goes on to describe what happened to those proud philosophers under this chastisement and how they were treated by that cruel enemy to whom God gave them over. It is impossible to utter or exaggerate in words the extremity of misery to which they were brought. Their enemy dragged them through all manner of sins and did not stop until he plunged them into sins filthy, foul, abominable, and unutterable. *God gave them over to ignominious passions* (Rom. i. 26). Woe to you, what will this your enemy prepare for you, this fierce and indomitable beast, if once you let yourself fall into his clutches! "Would you have me tell you," St. Ambrose says, "how he will treat you and what he will prepare for you? Like a hard-mouthed wild horse, that carries its rider from quagmire to quagmire and from hole to hole till he goes with him over a precipice." So will this appetite of yours treat you if you do not tame and mortify and master it. It will carry you from sin to sin and from vice to vice, and never stop till it precipitates you into most grievous sins and plunges with you into the depth of hell. So says Ecclesiasticus (xviii. 30): *Go not after thy lusts, but turn away from thine own will. If thou givest thy soul its lusts, it will make thee a joy to thine enemies.* Nothing so feasts the eyes of our enemies the devils as to see us given over to our appetites and fancies, for they will make us such as all hell conjoined could not make us. So the Wise Man begs God very earnestly not to send him such a scourge and chastisement: *O Lord, God of my life, and my soul, give me*

not over to this appetite, so shameless and unbridled; let it not run away with me (Ecclus. xxiii. 4-6). With reason do the saints say that there is no greater sign of God's anger than when He leaves the sinner to go after his own pleasure and by the taste of his own palate, following his appetites and desires. When the physician lets the sick man eat and drink as he likes, it is a sign of death; he leaves him as one past recovery. Now this is what God does with the sinner when He is very angry with him. He leaves him to do as he likes; and what is it that a man so out of health and so ill-inclined may be expected to like except what does him harm and causes death? Hereby we understand the unhappy and dangerous state of those who take it to be happiness and a grand thing to have their own way in everything.

CHAPTER IV

Of Holy Hatred of Oneself, and the Spirit of Mortification and Penance That Is Born of It

IF we consider well what has been said, that will be enough to engender in us that hatred and holy abhorrence of ourselves which Christ our Redeemer commends to us so much in His holy Gospel, saying that without it we cannot be His disciples. *If any man cometh to me, and hateth not . . . yea even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26). What is more necessary to this end than to know that our body is the greatest opponent and enemy that we have—a mortal enemy, the greatest traitor that ever has been seen, who goes about seeking the death, yea, the everlasting death, of him who gives him to eat and supplies all his necessities; who for a little pleasure thinks nothing of defying God and casting the soul into hell for ever and ever? If they told anyone: “Know that one of your household, and of those who eat and drink at your

table, is plotting treason to kill you," what fear would that inspire? And if they said: "Know further that so great is the hatred and enmity that he bears against you that he is quite ready to accept death if only he can kill you; he knows well that thereupon they are sure at once to seize him and put him to death; nevertheless, he is minded to risk his own life to take away yours;" how would the man hearing that be struck with fear and sudden alarms at dinner, at going to bed, at all hours, lest his enemy might come then and give him a blow that might prove fatal! And if he could discover who the traitor was, what hatred would he conceive and what vengeance would he take on him! Now this is our body, which eats and sleeps with us and knows very well that in doing harm to our soul it is doing harm also to itself and in casting the soul into hell it must go there with it; and nevertheless, to gratify its own taste, ventures all and sticks at nothing. See if we have not reason to abhor it! How many times has this your enemy made a place for you in hell! How many times has it made you offend that Infinite Goodness! Of how many spiritual blessings has it deprived you! How often does it put your salvation in danger every hour! Who, then, will not be indignant and conceive a holy anger against one who has done him so much harm, deprived him of so much good, and thrown him into so many dangers every hour! If we abhor the devil and hold him for our deadly enemy for the war he makes on us and the harm he does us, our flesh is a still greater enemy, for it makes on us a more cruel and a more continual war; and there is very little that the devils could do, if they did not find on their side this flesh and sensuality to aid them in making war upon us.

This is what made the saints have such a hatred and abhorrence of themselves; hence there sprang up in them that great spirit of mortification and penance to avenge themselves on this their enemy and keep him subject and submissive. This made them go always in fear of giving any

satisfaction and comfort to their body, thinking that this was to supply arms to their enemy, and that he might thereby gather force and strength to do them harm. St. Augustine says: "Let us not aid nor give strength to the body, lest it make war on the spirit"—*Ne praebeamus vires illicitas corpori nostro, ne committat bellum adversus spiritum nostrum*. And mortify it that it may not get the upper hand. As the Wise Man says: "*He that bringeth up a servant daintily from childhood, will afterwards find him rebellious* (Prov. xxix. 21).

The holy monks of old went so assiduously about this exercise, making it their aim to mortify and diminish the strength of this enemy, that, when other means sufficed not, they undertook excessive bodily labors to subdue and break in their body—as Palladius tells of a monk who, when much fatigued with thoughts of vanity and pride which he could not shake off, bethought him of taking a basket and carrying on his shoulders a great heap of earth from place to place. Being asked why he did that, he replied: "I am vexing him who vexes me." The same is told of St. Macarius; and of St. Dorotheus it is related that he did penance and much afflicted his body. Once someone, seeing him so hard worked, asked him: "Why do you thus torment your body?" He replied, "Because it is at drawn daggers with me." The glorious St. Bernard, kindling with holy hatred and anger against his body as against his deadly enemy, said: "Let God arise; let this armed enemy fall; let him fall and be crushed, this foe, this despiser of God, this lover of himself, this friend of the world, this slave of the devil. What think you? Certainly, if you think aught, you will say with me, 'He is guilty of death; let him be crucified, let him be crucified!'"

With this force and energy we must go to work mortifying our flesh and bringing it into subjection that it may not rise to a consequence to which it is not entitled and drag with it the spirit and the reason, especially since, once

this enemy is conquered, the devil also will be conquered. As the devils make war upon us and try to overcome us, using our flesh as their instrument, so we should make war upon the devils and overcome them by mortifying it and contradicting it. St. Augustine on these words: *I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty, I so fight, not as one beating the air, but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection* (I Cor. ix. 26), well advises us: "Chastise, then, your body; mortify your passions and evil inclinations, and in this manner you will overcome the devils, for in this way Paul teaches us to fight them." When a captain who is on the frontier of the Moors goes to make a sudden attack on them, any Moor that he holds prisoner he claps into the dungeon and leaves him there in irons that he may not rise up against him and assist his enemies; this is what we must do, subjecting and mortifying our flesh, that it may not join the party of our enemies.

CHAPTER V

That All Our Spiritual Advancement and Perfection Consists in Mortification

HENCE all the saints and masters of spiritual life have come to the conclusion that all our advancement and perfection consists in mortification. "You will advance just so much as you do violence to yourself," says St. Jerome. He says with Job (xxxviii. 13) that perfect wisdom and perfect fear of God *is not found in the land of them that live pleasantly*; that is, according to their own will. As of arable land, when they let it bear what it will, that is, thistles and thorns, they say that it *rests*; and when they force it to bear wheat or anything of that sort, they say that it *labors*, so when one lives according to his caprices and fancies, we say that he has a pleasant time of it. But in such a land, says St. Jerome, there is not found true wis-

dom, but only in the land of them that labor hard and mortify themselves and deny their appetites. This is the rule and measure whereby the saints measure the virtue and spiritual advancement of each and everybody. Would you, therefore, know what progress you have made in virtue? Examine what you have done to mortify yourself, to what extent you have overcome and curbed your passions and evil inclinations, how you stand for humility and patience, whether love of the things of this world and of flesh and blood is dead in you. It is in this, and not in sweetness and consolation in prayer, that you will see whether you have profited or not. We read of our holy Father Ignatius that he made greater account of mortification than of prayer, and by that measure he formed his judgment of persons. And our Father Francis Borgia, when anyone extolled or commended another to him as a saint, "He will be so indeed," said he, "if he be truly mortified." Blossius compares a mortified servant of God to a ripe bunch of grapes, sweet and pleasing to the taste; and one that is not mortified to a bunch of grapes sour, bitter, and harsh to the palate, according to the words of the Prophet Isaias: *I expected from my vine that it should yield me good grapes to make wine withal, and it has given me only wild ones* (Isaias v. 4). The difference there is between the children of God and those of the world is that these follow the motions of their passions and have no idea of mortification, but those that are of Christ aim at mortifying and crucifying their affections and appetites and not being governed by them, but by the spirit and reason (Gal. v. 24).

It is true that Christian perfection does not essentially consist in mortification, but in charity and love of God; and that man will be the more perfect, the more he is united with God by love. But as a stone raised from the ground, as soon as the impediments are removed which keep it there contrary to its natural inclination, falls with a rush to the center, which is its natural place, so our soul, which

is a spiritual substance and created for God, as soon as it is clear of the impediments and obstacles of its disorderly appetites and bad inclinations, at once by the aid of divine grace goes to God, as to its center and last end, and to His loving embrace. St. Augustine says very well that all things move according to the bias they have; light things moving up, as air and fire; heavy things down, as earth and water. What bias is in the elements and natural bodies, that is love in rational creatures; and as natural things move according to the bias that they have, so rational creatures move according to the love that predominates and reigns in them, for that is their bias. If love of the things here below, the craving for honor and reputation, the doing of our own will and the seeking of our own comforts, predominates in us, then our motions and desires will be sensual and earthly. But if by mortification we strip ourselves of the love of all sensual things, then the love of our Creator will predominate in us and will be our bias, and our heart will go straight to God more nimbly than the stone to its center. "Thou hast made us, O Lord, for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it rests in Thee"—*Fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec in te requiescat* (St. Augustine, "Confessions," I). That is why the saints measure our advancement and perfection by the measure of our mortification, for he who is great in mortification will be great in love of God and great in perfection.

On that text of the psalm: *As the hart thirsteth after the fountains of water, so doth my soul thirst after thee, my God* (Psalm xli. 2), St. Augustine says: "The hart kills the serpents it encounters and, when they are dead, is very thirsty and runs with great speed and nimbleness to the water springs." Would you know the reason why you have not much thirst and desire after perfection? The reason is that you do not kill the serpents as the hart does. "The serpents are our vices and disorderly passions; kill and mortify those serpents, and forthwith you will have

a great thirst after virtue and perfection"—*Serpentes vitia sunt; consume serpentes iniquitatis, tunc amplius desiderabis fontem veritatis*. Your soul will forthwith love and desire God as the hart the running waters. Thus at the rate at which mortification goes, at the same rate will perfection and love of God go. And elsewhere he says: "Is charity growing? Then cupidity is diminishing. Is charity perfect? Then cupidity is nowhere"—*Augmentum caritatis, diminutio cupiditatis: perfectio, nulla cupiditas*. As gold is more and more purified and refined, the more the alloy that it contains is wasted away and consumed, so charity and love of God are perfected and augmented, the more the inordinate love of ourselves and of all earthly things is diminished and made an end of. And when it shall be entirely consumed and made an end of, then charity and love of God will be entirely perfect and pure. Casian tells of the Abbot John that, being on his deathbed, his disciples gathered round him, as sons are wont to do round their parents at that hour, and earnestly begged him to say something to them for their consolation and spiritual advancement—some short instruction how to attain perfection. He heaved a deep sigh and said: "Never have I done my own will; and along with that I tell you another thing, which is also of great importance—I have never taught another anything but what I had first put in practice myself."

CHAPTER VI

*That Mortification Is Especially Necessary for Religious,
Particularly for Such as Have to Do with Their
Neighbor*

THIS practice of mortification is proper to all the servants of God, and all have need of it in order every day to fall in with the will of God. But particularly is it proper

to religious, for we renounced the world and came into religion for this purpose; and this is what St. Benedict says, that to be a religious is to change and alter one's habits. *Promitto conversionem morum meorum.* This is what we profess in religion and this is what we must continue doing by mortification, to *strip ourselves of the old man and put on the new*, as St. Paul says (Col. iii. 9). And so St. Bernard said to those who were entering religion: "See that the spirit only enter here and the body be left outside;" giving them to understand that in religion our object must not be to gratify our body and live according to its appetites and inclinations, but all our care must be for the soul and the spirit, according to that saying of the Apostle: *Walk according to the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the desires of the flesh* (Gal. v. 16). This it is to *walk in the spirit*—a thing so recommended and desired by the servants of God—to live according to the better part of ourselves, which is the spirit and reason, and not according to the inferior part, which is the flesh and sensuality. Cassian says that it was the common agreement and tradition of those ancient Fathers, and one much borne out by experience, that a man could not advance, nor even stay long in religion, unless he set about in earnest to mortify his will and appetites, for these are very contrary to the standard which obtains in religion.

While this is very befitting for all religious, it is most of all necessary to those of us whose institute brings us across our neighbor. St. Chrysostom very well proves that mortification of the passions is most necessary for those who for the help of their neighbor dwell and converse in the midst of towns; for in them those wild beasts (so he calls our passions) find much more food to sustain them in the great occasions which arise there. The soldier who never takes the field may dissemble his weakness; but, when he takes the field, he shows what he is. So, says St. Chrysostom, he who stays in his corner hides his faults; but he who

goes out to wrestle with the world and to be a spectacle to it must needs be a man of distinguished virtue and mortification.

Further, to gain over those with whom we deal, it is necessary to accommodate ourselves and throw ourselves into their attitude, so far as is possible, according to that saying of the Apostle: *I made myself all things to all men, that I might save all* (I Cor. ix. 22). It is easily seen how much mortification is necessary for this. Philosophers say that the pupil of the eye, the part where the impressions of all color are received and vision is formed, has not any color. And so it was necessary that it should be in order that it might be capable of receiving in itself the impressions of all colors and seeing them all as they are; for if it were of any color, it could perceive no color but that: *Intus existens prohibet externum*—"What is within shuts out what is without." If it were green, all that it saw would seem to us green; and if it were pink, all would appear to us pink. Thus it is necessary for you to set aside your natural temper and have your passions in complete mortification and be quite master of yourself in order that other people's tempers may find toleration and acceptance in you, and you may be able to deal with and accommodate yourself to all to gain all, as St. Paul did. It is not the spirit of religion, nor of perfection, to tie yourself to those of your own temperament and humor, so that, because you are choleric, you fit in only with the choleric; or because you are phlegmatic, you set your face against the choleric; and much less would it be the spirit of perfection and religion to tie yourself to those of your own nation. Would you not take it for a misfortune to have eyes that could see only one color? But a much greater misfortune is it to have a will so petty and ill conditioned as to be inclined only to those of your own nation or of your own natural temperament. Charity embraces all because it loves its neighbor for God and the sake of God; and thus it makes no difference between bar-

barian or Scythian, or any other sort of people. *Where there is no gentile nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian nor Scythian, but Christ is all their good, and Christ is in all* (Col. iii. 11). Charity would fain find place in its heart for all because it regards all as sons of God and brethren of Christ. For this it may readily be seen what need there is for mortification.

Besides this, mortification is very necessary to preserve amongst us that union and fraternal charity, so much commended to us by Christ our Redeemer, Who would have us thereby known for His disciples (John xiii. 35). What makes war on this union and fraternal charity is self-seeking, looking after one's own tastes and conveniences, one's own honor and reputation. Let anyone enter into himself and he will see that every time he fails in charity, it is through seeking and striving after something of that sort or wanting not to lose it and yield it to another. Now mortification it is that rids us of all that and smooths the way for charity, which *seeketh not her own* (I Cor. xiii. 5). And so says St. Ambrose: "Whoever wishes to please and give satisfaction to all, must seek in all things not his own utility and profit, but the utility and profit of his brethren, as the Apostle did," and admonishes us to do. *Take no account of your own interests, but of what is convenient for others* (Phil. ii. 4).

CHAPTER VII

Of Two Sorts of Mortification and Penance, and How the Society Embraces and Practises Both

THE glorious Augustine on those words of St. Matthew: *From the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. xi. 12), says there are two sorts of penance and mortification. The one is corporal, which chastises and afflicts

the body and is what we call exterior penance, as disciplines, fastings, haircloth, a hard bed, poor clothes, rough diet, and the like, which afflict and chastise the flesh and withdraw from it its comfort and delight. The other sort of mortification, St. Augustine says, is loftier and more precious. It consists in ruling and governing the motions of appetite, struggling daily against its vicious and evil inclinations, setting aside our own judgment, overcoming our anger, repressing our impatience, restraining our craving for delicate food, our eyes, our tongue, and all our senses and motions. Whoever does this, breaking through the wall of his flesh, his passions and appetites, mounts up and enters with violence and forces his way into the kingdom of heaven. These are the men of might, the valiant men, who take heaven by storm. Then interior and spiritual mortification is more excellent than the former, inasmuch as the taming of the spirit and trampling underfoot of honor and reputation comes to much more than afflicting of the flesh, taking disciplines, and wearing hairshirts. And as this penance is more excellent and precious, so also is it more difficult and likely to cost more, because the greater a thing is, the more costly. This is also the doctrine of St. Gregory in many places, and of St. Dorotheus and other saints.

The Society embraces and practises both these sorts of penance. As to the first, although our Father did not see fit to leave directions for ordinary penances appointed and determined by rule and to be taken as of obligation, but on just consideration the manner of life in the Society is common as to the exterior, yet he left in another way very good provision for this, as we will say presently. Many just considerations moved our Father to establish and enact that the manner of living in the Society should be common as to the exterior. For the means must be proportionate to the end; and the end of the Society being to labor, not only for its own advancement, but also for the advancement

and salvation of our neighbor, it was very fit that we should wear a habit common to all clerics of good standing, the better thereby to gain access to all sorts and conditions of men. Thus with religious we are religious; with clerics, clerics; and with lay people we wear a habit not different from that of the secular clergy. Add to this that the Society was instituted in Luther's time, when heretics hated religious and their habits; wherefore, to have a more free access to them and to be the better able to dispute with them and convince them (which is a function proper to our institute), it was convenient that we should have nothing extraordinary in our habit that might distinguish us from other respectable ecclesiastics; for that would have caused us to be held in abhorrence by the heretics ere ever we began to deal with them, and so one of the chief ends for which God instituted the Society would have been frustrated.

Besides, if we wore a rough habit, possibly that sinful neighbor of yours would not dare to come to you, thinking that you and your behavior must be as rough as your habit. Be it rather a common habit, received and recognized by all, that thus we may have more easy access to all sorts of people, and none may have a horror of dealing with us. Our Father would have us even by our habit make ourselves all things to all men, the better to gain all, imitating herein the example of Christ our Redeemer, of Whom St. Augustine says, and St. Thomas quotes him, that the better to accommodate Himself for mixing and dealing with men, and for their greater spiritual advantage, He chose to take up an every-day exterior rather than the austerity and severity of the Baptist.

As for other and exterior penances, although he did not leave them appointed and determined by rule, yet there is a living rule, the superior, who gives and assigns to each according to his need. Our Father says that these penances may be taken in two ways, either what each one shall

choose for himself for his better advancement in spirit (with permission, however, of the superior), or when the superior shall oblige him to them for the same end. He judged this more suitable in the Society than to determine them by rule, because a dead rule could not be equal for all, since not all have equal strength for these penances; and if there was one prescription for all, he who could not do so much would be distressed at not being able to march in line with the rest. Thus as one medicine or one diet and regimen does not suit all sick persons, neither does it suit all to do the same penances. Some penances are better suited for youth, others for old age; some for cases of sickness, others for health; some for one who joins innocent, others for him who joins, as they say, as full of wounds of sin as a sieve of holes.

And so St. Augustine says, and St. Basil, that no one should be surprised at the same methods' not being observed with all in religion, some doing more penance than others, because equality here would be a very great inequality. And not only is this diversity and difference proper for different persons, but even for the same person in difference of needs and seasons; one penance is good for time of temptation and dryness, another in time of peace and devotion; one to preserve devotion, another to recover it after it has been lost. For this reason our Father would not lay down in the Society a certain fixed scale of penances for all, but left it to the discretion of the superior, who is our spiritual physician, according to the strength and need of each one to appoint and allow to some more, to others less; which is according to the rule which the angel gave to St. Pacomius on the part of God, where it was ordered that the superior was in this way to appoint the penances which each religious was to do.

Thus if there are not in the Society any ordinary penances appointed by rule, as there are commonly in other religious orders, this is not because there are no corporal

penances in the Society or because in it there is no great esteem and veneration of those which other orders according to their institute laudably observe, the variety of which institutes is the beauty of the Church; but because our founder considered it more suitable to our institute and more in accordance with its ends and purposes and better in agreement with the ancient doctrine of the saints to leave the measure and manner of them to the prudence and charity of the superior. This arrangement has not led to there being fewer penances in the Society, but rather to there being more, and to their being taken with more good will and devotion. And thus we see, by the bounty and mercy of the Lord, that there are used and practised more penances of this sort in the Society than could have been enacted by rule. May it please the Lord that this fervor and spirit, so good and so holy and so well borne out by the practice of the Church of God, may ever go on increasing; and that it may be more necessary to keep us at a walking pace and draw the bridle than to use the spur, as up to this day by the grace of the Lord we have always experienced.

The second sort of penance, which is the mortification of the passions and disorderly self-love, is embraced most particularly in the Society. And this was another of the just considerations which moved our founder not to leave ordinary penances appointed and determined by rule; for he wished us to set our eyes on the interior mortification of our passions and appetites, and that this should be our principal penance, for its being, as we have said, more precious and excellent. Our Father puts in his Constitutions and Rules things of great perfection, things for which great mortification and self-denial are necessary, and wishes our chief study to be in what regards this self-denial and continual mortification and the growing more and more in true and solid virtues and in all perfection. He might have feared, and with reason: If I leave them special ordinary penances marked out, maybe they will stop there and be

content with that, saying: "I keep by rule so many fasts, so many hairshirts and disciplines, and that is enough for me;" and leave out the main thing and what is more to the point, which is the mortification of their passions and the practice of true and solid virtues. Thus he would not leave us anything to rest upon but virtue and interior mortification. He wished our life to be common as to the exterior, that in the interior it might be singular and excellent, accompanied with solid virtues and much mortification, and that in such manner and in such a degree as to redound on to the exterior and mark us for religious. Of this interior mortification we have more need than other religious, since in their case their habit marks them off from the rest of the world, and their sackcloth dress and the asperity of their life gives them credit with the people. But there is nothing of that in the Society, since it is not proper to our institute; hence it needs must be made up from within, and there must be in us so much humility and modesty, so much charity and zeal for souls, and such a union with God, that whoever sees and converses with us may say: "*Truly this is a religious of the Society of Jesus; these are the seed that the Lord hath blessed* (Isaias lxi. 9)." Thus what we should chiefly set our eyes on and excite ourselves to is this interior mortification; and the day that we shall have ceased to practise that, we must understand that we have ceased to live as religious of the Society. That other exterior penance which we use, we must take as a means to gain this, as was said and taught by that apostolic man, our Father Francis Xavier, and is also the doctrine of St. Bonaventure.

Hence will be understood the explanation of a thing that we so often hear talked of, and by the goodness of the Lord experience too—how the Society is very gentle in its ways of proceeding. The gentleness of the Society does not come from there being in it no hard things to do, nor from superiors' having to give way to all our requests, for that would

not be religious life at all. There are hard things, and very hard things, to do in the Society, as we shall presently say. But the explanation is that in the Society all must study mortification and true denial of themselves; all must be very indifferent and resigned to anything that superiors think fit to do with them. This good disposition, this indifference and resignation that we have, is the explanation of the great gentleness that obtains in the Society, as well in the government and commands of superiors as in the obedience of subjects; for all are given over and placed in the hands of their superior as a little clay in the hands of the potter, to do therewith what he will. This was the marvelous artifice and contrivance of our blessed founder, inspired by the Holy Ghost, in insisting so much on this mortification and self-denial, as though he would say: "In the Society there are difficult and arduous things; now that all may be prepared and ready for them, and that superiors may not be afraid and reluctant to order them, let us lay this foundation of mortification and resignation of ourselves; let all understand that they must be as indifferent and resigned in the hands of their superior to do whatever he wishes as is the clay in the hands of the potter, and as a piece of cloth is in the hands of the tailor, who cuts from it as he chooses and where he chooses, this portion for sleeves and that other for skirts; this for the neck, and that for the border of the garment; and one is as good cloth as the other, since it is all of one piece; and what is put to serve in the kitchen is as good as the other that is put for the table, since it was of the same lump, as St. Paul says, *ex eadem massa* (Rom. ix. 20). Thus all were classmates and of the same standing in the Society; and perhaps he who was put to teach the elements of grammar was as able a man as he who was set to teach arts or theology; still the clay does not complain, nor the cloth, *Why hast thou made me so?* (Rom. ix. 20).

Thus the cause and root of the gentleness there is in the Society must be in yourself, in your being very mortified, very resigned and indifferent to everything, and there being in you no resistance or contradiction, either exterior or interior, to all that superiors choose to do with you. Thus, when you do not feel such facility and cheerfulness in orders of obedience and in other things that befall, do not throw the blame on your superior, nor complain of him, but on yourself, that you are not as ready or mortified as you ought to be. The superior does his duty and presupposes that you are a religious and, as such, mortified and indifferent to everything; and that it is not necessary to consult your will nor inquire into your disposition, since you always ought to be disposed and ready for any work which obedience shall command you. Rather the superior does you great honor in taking you for such and in treating and commanding you as such. When a stone is well tooled, with what ease does the mason set it in its place!—he only has to let it drop. But when it is not so, how many blows, how much hammering, how much labor is necessary to lay it!

Hence follows another thing worthy of consideration, and noted by St. Bonaventure, that, though this interior mortification is much more difficult than exterior penances, as we have said, nevertheless one may more easily find a just excuse from exterior penances than from interior mortification. As regards the former, one may say with truth: "I have not strength to fast so much, nor to wear so many hairshirts, nor to take so many disciplines, nor to go barefoot, nor to rise at midnight;" but none can say: "I have not the health and strength to be humble or to be patient or to be obedient and submissive." You might say that you have not virtue sufficient for all the humility and all the obedience and resignation that is found in the Society and is necessary there; but you cannot say: "I have not health enough for that," for what is necessary for it is not

bodily but spiritual strength; strong and weak, healthy and sick, great and small, all can do it with the grace of God if they will.

This is a very great consolation for sundry persons who are often tempted to pusillanimity and discouragement, thinking that they have not the abilities or the stock of natural gifts to gain the end of an institute so high as is ours in the Society. In the First Book of Kings Holy Scripture tells us that Saul sent a message to David, to whom he wished to marry his daughter. David replied: *Who am I to be son-in-law to a king? I am a poor man, I have not shoulders broad enough for that* (I Kings xviii. 23). But the king returned the answer: *The king needeth no dowry, no gifts nor jewels: he wanteth only a hundred foreskins of Philistines, to have vengeance on his enemies*. We may give the same answer here. God needs none of those parts, those abilities and talents that you think—*Thou art my God, since thou hast no need of my goods* (Psalm xv. 2). What He wants is that you should circumsise those Philistines of your appetites and evil inclinations. This is what the Society asks and requires of us; and thus, if you wish, you will be good enough for it. Contrive to be very humble, very indifferent and resigned to all that they ask you to do, and that will be enough. God deliver you from vanity and pride; God deliver you from being a lover of your own ideas and conveniences, from going about in search of silly amusements, and not being clear and straight with your superior; for if that be the sort of person that you are, no other religious order can be a greater difficulty to you than the Society. But to the humble, to the mortified, to the truly poor of spirit, to the indifferent and resigned, to him who has no will of his own, all that is done in the Society becomes easy and very sweet.

We have here reason of thankfulness to God, recognizing the great bounty and benefit that He has done us in this, that, though there are things in the Society of them-

selves difficult and irksome, nevertheless He has made them to us so sweet and agreeable and so easy to bear. As for exterior penances, as we have said, by the bounty of God there are more done than could have been prescribed by rule. And for interior penance and mortification, which St. Augustine says is the greater and more precious of the two, we have in our Rules and Constitutions things of such high perfection and in themselves so difficult as greatly to exceed all exterior penances and mortifications.

Thus, for instance, this having to give an account to the superior and to the prefect of spiritual things of all that passes in our soul, of all our motions, temptations and evil inclinations, and of all our faults and imperfections—nothing less than that is demanded and done in the Society, and it is one of the most substantial ordinances in it—it is plain to see that this is a thing of itself more difficult than fasting and discipline and haircloth. That which he still commands us: “For their greater advancement in spirit and especially for the greater abasement and humiliation of self, all must be content to have all their errors and faults and whatever things are observed and known in them, manifested to superiors by any person whatsoever that shall come to know them out of confession,” is a thing requiring great humility and mortification, not to complain that warning was not given you first and that your fault was made out greater than it was. And, further, you must be prepared to be publicly rebuked, and this not only with cause but even without it. And even when false witnesses are brought against us, our Father requires that we should be not only ready but even glad, without giving occasion for them; and that, as people in the world rejoice in honor and reputation, so we should rejoice in dishonor, injuries, and insults; for the which it is clear how much virtue is necessary. And, further, we must be indifferent to any office, function, and occupation that obedience may choose to lay on us, and for whatever grade in the Society in which it may wish to incor-

porate us. Now there being in the Society such different offices and grades, some higher than others, for a man to be indifferent to the lower and as content in it as if they had set him in a higher position, is a thing of great perfection, for which great mortification is necessary.

You must be ever ready and quite prepared and indifferent to go to any part of the world to exercise these ministries, not only to another college, but to another province and to any foreign kingdom, to the East and West Indies, to Rome, Germany, England [A.D. 1610], Transylvania, where you may never be able to see kindred and friends, and they lose hope of seeing you. As for poverty, the Society professes a poverty so strict and rigorous that no one may receive or keep any nice thing in his room, not to say eatables, but not so much as a book in which he may underline a passage, or take the volume away with him to another college. And we are to be so denuded and detached from all things that we cannot lock a trunk or a drawer to keep anything, but all must be open and exposed to view, as though to say: "Take it if you will, for it is not mine."

These things and others like them that there are in the Society, it may plainly be seen, are superior both in perfection and in difficulty to all exterior penances and austerities. Thus anyone who has a spirit of severity against himself and a desire to mortify himself much and do great penance, which is a very good spirit to have, will have his hands full in the Society. And though there have been some who, tempted against their vocation, have tried to cover over and palliate their temptation under pretense of finding greater perfection and doing more penance in another order; the truth is that that was not the motive or end that moved them, but their inability to bear the weight of the mortification and perfection that is professed in the Society. Of this we have experience in the confession of the men themselves, and the thing is further declared by the apostolic see. His Holiness Pius V, who was a religious

of the holy Order of St. Dominic, declared so expressly in the bull which he granted to the Society against apostates who went out of it into the world or into any other order except the Carthusians; when, after having referred to the perfection and difficulty and great labor there are involved in the institute of the Society, he exposes the root of the temptation that some have of leaving it or passing to other orders. These are his words: "There are some who from levity of mind and desire to escape the labor which the religious of the Society continually undergo for the salvation of souls, indiscreetly preferring their own private ends to the common good of the Society and of the Christian commonwealth, under false pretenses of being animated by a desire of gaining more perfection and doing more penance, asserted that they could pass to another order, even of mendicants, and so forth." Thus in reality it was no desire of greater perfection or greater penance, but of escaping labor and difficulty, since they did not feel in themselves stock of virtue enough for so much perfection and mortification, such indifference and resignation, as are necessary in the Society. Therefore did our Father insist so much on this mortification, and wishes us to practise it and dwell much upon it, and that it be the continual study and aim of all.

CHAPTER VIII

That Mortification Is Not a Hatred, but a True Love, Not of Our Soul Alone, but Even of Our Very Body

SINCE we have said, and it is the doctrine of the saints, taken from the holy Gospel, that we ought to abhor ourselves, and this seems a very hard thing and contrary to our nature, therefore, that none may take fright at hearing this said nor thence find occasion for being discouraged and abandoning mortification, we will here explain how this is

not a hatred and abhorrence whereby we wish evil, but a true love, not of our soul alone, but of our very body; nay, rather, the failing to mortify ourselves is a true hatred and abhorrence, not of the soul alone, but also of the body.

The glorious St. Augustine on those words of St. Paul: *The spirit lusteth against the flesh* (Gal. v. 17), says: "Far be it, brethren, far be it, that the spirit in lusting against the flesh should abhor and hate the flesh. What, then, does it abhor? The vices of the flesh, its craft and evil inclinations, the resistance of the flesh to reason. As for the flesh, it rather loves it in mortifying and contradicting it, just as the physician does not abhor the sick man, but his sickness; he wars against that; but as for the sick man, he rather loves him." And this is well proved; for to love anyone, as the philosopher says, is to will and desire his good; while to abhor one is to wish evil to come upon him. But he who goes about mortifying his body and combating its appetites and disorderly desires, is seeking and procuring for his body the greatest and highest good, which is eternal repose and glory; and thus he it is that truly loves his body. And he who has no mind to mortify himself, but gives himself to the gratification of his evil inclinations and appetites, is seeking and procuring for his body the greatest evil that he possibly can seek and procure, which is hell for ever and ever; and thus he it is that truly abhors his body. So the prophet says: *He that loveth iniquity, hateth his own soul* (Psalm x. 6), because he is procuring and contriving for it hell for ever and ever. And for the same reason, says St. Augustine, we may say that he abhors also his body, because he is procuring and contriving for it the same evil. And so theologians say that righteous and good men love themselves more than sinners and evil men, not only as regards the soul, but also as regards the body, since they are desiring and procuring for it that true good which is the blessedness of heaven, of which the soul is to partake, and after its fashion the body also. And St. Thomas adds

for this same reason that the righteous man loves his body, not with any common sort of love, but with the love of charity, which is the highest and most profitable love.

This is clearly seen by the example of two sick men, one of whom eats and drinks according to his liking and will not submit to bleeding or take a purge or any medicine; and the other governs himself well, keeping his mouth shut, although he is very thirsty and hungry, and taking the purge, bitter though it be, and submitting to being bled, although it hurts him. It is clear that this second patient loves his life and his body and his health—to gain and keep which he is ready to bear a little suffering and be put on diet and take medicines—better than the other, of whom we rather say that he is cutting his own throat by not submitting to suffer a little thirst and inconvenience. In the same manner it may be argued to our purpose. And so St. Bernard said to some seculars who were horrified at his monks' treating their bodies so badly, saying that they bore a deadly hatred to them: to whom the saint answered that it was they in the world who really detested their bodies, since to give them a little enjoyment of sensual delights they bound them over to everlasting torments; while the monks truly loved their bodies, since they afflicted them for a little time to merit a lasting repose.

This truth was taught us by Christ our Redeemer in the holy Gospel. For after saying: *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me*, He goes on to give the reason, saying: *For whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it* (Matt. xvi. 24-25). St. Augustine writes: "Great and wonderful pronouncement, how a man's love for his own life means the loss of it, and his hatred of it the saving it from loss. If you have loved it badly, then you have hated it; and if you have hated it well, then you have loved it. Happy they who have hated it to save it, lest they should lose it by lov-

ing it. Love it not for this life, lest you lose it for life everlasting," as the same Lord says: *He that hateth his life in this world, preserveth it unto life everlasting* (John ii. 25). And he gives another good reason in confirmation of this. We do not cease to love a thing, he says, because we love something else better. The sick man clearly does not cease to love his foot or his arm for allowing it to be amputated when amputation is necessary to save his life; he loves it well enough, but he loves his life better and allows himself to lose the less to save the greater. And, again, the miser loves his money and desires much to keep it; but nevertheless he divests himself of it and flings it away to buy bread and other necessities of life because, much as he loves his money, he loves his life better and is ready to lose the less to preserve the greater. In like manner a man does not cease to love his flesh by mortifying it, but he loves his soul and life everlasting better; and for his soul and for the attaining of perfection and life everlasting it is needful to mortify and maltreat his flesh; therefore he mortifies and maltreats it accordingly, and this is not abhorrence or lack of love, but it is loving God more and loving more one's own soul and perfection.

CHAPTER IX

*That He Who Makes No Effort to Mortify Himself Does
Not Only Not Live the Life of a Spiritual, but Not
Even of a Rational, Being*

THE glorious Augustine says: "There is one life of beasts, another of angels, another of men. The life of beasts is entirely taken up with things of earth and the satisfaction of their appetites; that of angels is wholly taken up with God and the things of heaven; that of men is midway between these two lives, since man partakes of the one nature and of the other. If he lives according to the spirit,

he becomes like the angels and a companion of them. If he lives according to the flesh, he becomes like the beasts and a companion of them." This agrees with what St. Ambrose says: "He is carnal who follows the inclinations of the flesh; and he is spiritual who shapes his life according to the commandments of God." Thus he who lives according to the appetites of the flesh does not only not live a spiritual life, but falls short of the natural life of man, living the animal life of beasts. This alone should suffice greatly to animate us to mortification, since it is a thing most unworthy of the high birth and nobility of man, who was created in the image and likeness of God and to enjoy Him forever, to come to be like beasts, making himself a servant and a slave of a thing so bestial as the flesh and sensuality, subjecting himself to them and guiding himself thereby, and giving full play to the furious onset of his bestial appetite.

St. Bernard says: "It is a great abuse and disorder for the handmaid to be mistress and give command and for the rightful mistress, who should command, to be turned into a handmaid." This is the disorder and perversity which Solomon saw: *I saw slaves going on horseback, made masters and giving commands, and princes crawling about, serving like slaves* (Eccles. x. 7). Father Master Avila says: "Think you not that it would be a monstrous thing, a portentous sight to all who saw it, for a beast to have a man in bit and bridle, taking him where it would, ruling him whom it ought to serve?" Now of these there are so many, of low and high degree, controlled by the bridle of their bestial appetites, that, just because there are so many, we no longer take it as a thing to stare at, nor are we shocked at the portentous sight, nor does it excite in us any wonder, of which more's the pity. It is told of Diogenes that one day at noon he went walking in the market place at Athens with a candle, looking for something; and when asked, "What are you looking for?" he said: "I am looking to see if I can find a man." "Why, don't you

see the market place full of them?" "These," he said, "are not men, but beasts, since they live not as men but beasts, ruled and guided by their bestial appetites."

St. Augustine brings in here a graceful and apt comparison. What would be generally thought in society of a man who walked with his feet in the air and his head downmost? "That's a tumbler," they would say; "a farcical and ridiculous performance." Now such in the eyes of God and the angels, says St. Augustine, is the man in whom the flesh is mistress and reason the handmaid; he walks topsy-turvy, feet above and head below. Who would not be shocked? Even Seneca felt this and said a thing divinely true: "I am too great and born to too great things, to become the slave of my own body"—*Maior sum, et ad maiora natus, quam ut mancipium fiam mei corporis*—a sentence for a religious and every Christian to carry written on his heart. If a gentile by the mere light of nature attained to feeling this and being shocked at such a spectacle, what may we expect of a Christian, aided by the light of faith, and of a religious, forearmed and favored by so many blessings and benefits of God? He who is not shocked at this, nor resents it, continues St. Augustine, suffers from a perversion of reason and will be a monster more wonderful than a man turned into a beast without resenting it or thinking there was anything particular to see in such a sight.

A philosopher [Galen] relates of himself that in his youth he saw a man setting about in great excitement to unlock a door. Things went wrong, and for all his efforts he could not open it, and all his excitement went for nothing. So angry did he get that he began gnawing the key with his teeth and kicking at the door; and not stopping at that, he began to blaspheme God and foam at the mouth like a raving lunatic, while his eyes looked as though they would start from his head. The philosopher says that, when he saw this, he conceived such a hatred and abhor-

rence of the vice of anger that thereafter no one ever saw him out of temper, that he might not be seen in similar anger. All this should go to aid us to live like men of reason and not let the appetites of the flesh carry us away. St. Jerome on that text of Job (i. 1): *There was a man in the land of Hus, whose name was Job*, says he was a man indeed, and gives the reason that we have said, because the flesh in him was not mistress to give orders, but kept subject and submissive, he weighing everything that he did in the scales of reason, according to that saying of Scripture: *The lust of sin shall be under thy power and thou shalt hold sway over it* (Gen. iv. 7).

CHAPTER X

That There Is Greater Trouble in Not Practising Mortification Than in Practising It

SOMEONE may say: I see well the advantage and necessity of mortification; but there comes before me the difficulty and labor, and that withdraws me from it. To this I answer in the first place with St. Basil: If for bodily health we willingly take medicines that are very bitter and allow the physician or surgeon to cut and burn where it seems good to him; if for property and money men face such great difficulties and dangers by land and sea, it will be but reasonable to face some difficulty and undergo some labor for the spiritual health of our soul and the attainment of the everlasting good things of heavenly glory. But since after all we are naturally prone to shun labor and trouble, and where we are forced to suffer something, we would wish to have as little of it as possible, I say in the second place that there is greater trouble in shunning mortification than in mortifying oneself. St. Augustine says: "Thou hast ordered it, O Lord, and so it is, that the ill-controlled mind be a torment and pain to itself"—*Iussisti*,

Domine, et sic est, ut poena sua sibi sit omnis animus inordinatus. The interior revolt of appetite against reason and of reason against God causes in man great torment and restlessness. And so it is in general in all things; for what thing is there in the world that, being out of order, is not naturally restless and discontented? What pains are caused by a dislocated bone! What violence is suffered by the element out of its natural place! But it being a thing so proper and natural to a reasonable man to live according to reason, how can it be but that his very nature shall protest, and his own conscience bark, when he lives in a disorderly and unreasonable way? Very well did holy Job say: *Who hath ever resisted God, and lived at peace?* (Job ix. 4). There is no peace or rest to be had by living at that rate. And so St. John in the Apocalypse says: *They who adored the beast found no joy day or night* (Apoc. xiv. 11). If you serve this beast of your flesh and sensuality, you will never know ease or rest.

Medical men in the world say that the health and good disposition of the body is in the due tempering and proportion of the humors and that, when they are out of that proportion and temperament which it is natural for them to have, sicknesses and pains are caused; and when they are well attempered and proportioned, there is health, and they cause outwardly cheerfulness and bodily vigor. So the health and good disposition of our soul consist in the proportion and moderation of the passions, which are its humors. When they are not so tempered and mortified, they cause spiritual sicknesses. When they are so, there are in the soul health and good disposition, producing in him who has them great cheerfulness and tranquillity. Further, they say, and say well, that the passions in our heart are like winds at sea, for that as the winds toss and disturb the sea, so the passions toss and disturb the heart with their disorderly cravings and motions. Now there rises the passion of anger to trouble and disturb us; now

the wind of pride and vainglory blows; now impatience carries us away, now envy. Therefore the Prophet Isaias said: *The wicked are as a troubled sea that cannot rest* (Isaias lvii. 20). Thus, if you succeed in commanding the winds of your passions and appetites and laying them to rest, mortifying and moderating them by reason, you will have great tranquillity and peace; but while you do not attend to this, you will be in a storm.

That it may be more clearly seen that greater trouble and a heavier cross await him who shuns mortification than him who mortifies himself, let us descend to particular cases of daily experience. See how you are when you have let the passion of anger or impatience have its way, and you have spoken a passionate word to your brother or done something else against good order and edification—what sadness, what disquiet, what disturbance and regret you feel within you. Tell me if the pain and trouble you feel over that are not greater than what you could have felt in mortifying yourself. There is no doubt about that.

See the alarms and perturbations that an unmortified religious feels, one who is not indifferent and resigned for anything and everything that obedience may choose to do with him. One only thing to which he has a repugnance is enough to make him walk in perpetual pain and distress, because that is the thing that is ever intruding upon him and taking the first place in his thoughts. And though it has never crossed the mind of superiors to employ him for that purpose, yet after all it is an order that might be and often is given, and he does not know but what it will be; he lives in continual alarm and anxiety about their commanding him that. When one has a sore on his foot, he thinks that everyone he meets is going to tread on him there; so the unmortified man thinks that they are going to hit upon his sore point. But the mortified man, who is indifferent and resigned for all, is always content and joyful and has nothing to fear.

Again, consider the pain and disappointment that rankles in the heart of the proud man when he sees himself thrust into a corner and forgotten, no account made of him, no posts of distinction and honor, such as he would desire, entrusted to him. See again the fear and anxiety that he is in when such things are entrusted to him and he is charged with some public performance, thinking how he is to succeed and whether perchance he may not incur disgrace where he thought to gain honor. On every side his pride afflicts and torments him—miserable state! And so it is generally in all other things. Your passions are your torturers and executioners, tormenting you perpetually so long as you make no effort to mortify them. And this is the truth, be your desire accomplished or not. So long as it is not accomplished, this desire deferred afflicts and wearies his soul; *hope deferred afflicteth the soul* (Prov. xiii. 12); and when his desire comes to be accomplished and he gets his own way, that very having it is again a pain and torment. “Woe to me! I am only having my own way, I have carried my point at last. I get no merit for this since I do it for my own satisfaction and because I wanted it.” All is turned into vinegar.

Add to this the remorse of conscience that he carries with him who makes no effort to mortify himself and do his duty. For what contentment can a religious find, who came into religion for no other end than to study his spiritual improvement and seek perfection, and is doing nothing of the sort? His life must be one of pain and grief. And the same we may say of every man, according to his state, when he is not doing his duty. When we are not doing our duty, the gnawing worm of conscience that we carry within us continually pricks us with remorse and gnaws our vitals. Father Master Avila says very well: “Place on one side of the scale the afflictions which he may undergo who is diligent, lives a fervent life, and studies his own mortification, and in the other what the tepid and

unmortified religious suffers because he has no mind to undergo those other sufferings, and you will find the one a thousand times greater than the other."

It is a wonderful thing that he finds more pleasure and satisfaction who serves the Lord with diligence in watching, and praying, and all other hardship and mortification that come in his way, than another who is tepid and lax does in talk and pastime, self-indulgence, and doing his own will. The tepid man laughs outwardly and gnaws his heart within; the just and upright man weeps, but has joy in his heart. The path of the tepid and lazy, says the Wise Man (Prov. xv. 19), is like walking on thorns; so God says by the Prophet Osee: *I will hedge in thy way with thorns* (Osee ii. 6). In those pleasures God has put sad stings of remorse of conscience; in those pastimes, bitterness; and in doing one's own will, pain and torment. There the tepid and lazy man finds thorns that prick and pierce his heart. But *the way of the just is smooth and without stumbling-block* (Prov. xv. 19). Oh, the peace and contentment of the good religious, the mortified man, who goes steadily about the work of his spiritual progress, doing what a good religious ought to do! There is no contentment to equal his. Every day we experience this, that, when we vigorously go about the service of God, we are very cheerful and content; but when we grow tepid and careless, then we are sad and disconsolate; and this is often the cause of our fits of sadness and despondency, as we shall say in its place. Thus by shunning smaller troubles one comes to fall into others greater. *Whoso feareth the hoarfrost, the snow shall fall upon him* (Job vi. 16). You were saying that it was to avoid trouble that you omitted to mortify yourself. I say that if for no other reason, for this very reason you ought to contrive to mortify yourself to live in peace and quiet—how much the more so when mortification brings so many other advantages!

CHAPTER XI

Here We Begin to Treat of That Practice of Mortification

THE principal means that we can take on our part to gain this mortification and victory over ourselves, is to practise ourselves much in denying our own will and contradicting our desires, and giving no satisfaction to our flesh nor letting it have its own way. In this manner, little by little, you overcome nature, uproot vice and passion, and introduce and plant virtue. St. Dorotheus gives us very profitable advice hereon. When you are molested with any passion or bad inclination, if you yield to your weakness and choose to put the thing in execution, be sure, he says, that this passion and inclination will take deeper root and grow stronger and will trouble you more from that time onwards. But if you manfully resist the passion and evil inclination, it will progressively diminish and every day have less strength to combat and molest you till it comes to lose all its strength and give you no further trouble or annoyance. This is also very important when there is question of temptations, as we shall declare later on. It is very important to resist first beginnings, to the end that the evil habit may not bring us little by little into greater difficulties.

The saints say that we have to deal with our body as a horseman mounted on a furious and ill-bridled horse, which may with industry and courage be mastered and made to go where you wish and at the pace you wish. So it is necessary to rein in tight and not neglect the spur; in that manner you will be master of your body and make of it what you want, that it shall go where you wish and at the pace that you wish. But if you have not the courage and dexterity to govern it and master it, it will master you and fling you down some precipice. The way that men are wont to take with an animal that has some bad propensity, in

order to cure it, is not to let it indulge the same. Now this must also be the way for us to take to be rid of the evil propensities and inclinations of our flesh, not to allow any indulgence in what it likes, but contradict and vigorously oppose all its appetites and desires.

To animate us more to this exercise, it will be a great help always to act on the principle that we laid down at the beginning, that this outward man, our flesh and sensuality, is the greatest adversary and enemy that we have, and as such is always at work making mischief for us, lusting against the spirit, against reason, and against God. One of the chief reasons why the saints say that self-knowledge is a most efficacious means to overcome all temptations is that he who practises this, well understanding his own weakness and misery, as soon as an evil thought or desire makes its appearance, sees at once that it is a temptation of the enemy, going about to snare and overthrow him, and stands on his guard and gives it no credence nor hearing. But he who does not know himself does not know the temptation when it comes nor take it for such; rather the temptation seems to him very reasonable, and sensuality a necessity, and so he is easily overcome by temptation. It will help you greatly to mortify yourselves if you remember that you carry about with you the greatest enemy you have, and understand that all these impulses and temptations that come to you come of your flesh and sensuality, which as your deadly enemy aims at procuring your evil. Thus you will easily mortify yourself and cast it off, for who will trust his enemy?

St. Bernard affords us another good consideration, saying that we must deal with ourselves and with our body as with a sick man entrusted to our care, who asks for and desires much that would do him harm, and must be refused accordingly; and what is for his good, though he has no taste for it, must be given him, and he made to take it. Oh, if we could succeed in taking ourselves for sick persons,

and steadily held that all these impulses and desires that come to us are sick man's whims and persuasions of our enemy seeking our evil, how easily should we cast them off and overcome them! But if you do not take yourself for a sick man but for a healthy, and do not take yourself for an enemy but for a friend, you are in great danger. How can you resist that which you think is not evil, but good; not a deception, but truth?

St. Dorotheus relates that, when he was in the monastery in charge of the spirituality, and all the monks came to him with their temptations, one day there came to him a monk to give him an account of a temptation that he had to gluttony, which went so far as to make him steal things to eat. He asked him very lovingly why he did this, and he answered that for the hunger that possessed him what was given him at table was not enough. He advised him to go to the abbot and declare his necessity; but to that he made great difficulty, saying that he was too ashamed. "Wait, then," said Dorotheus, "and I will find a remedy for that." So off he went himself to the abbot and gave him an account of the straits the monk was in. The abbot left the case to him, telling him to do whatever he thought proper for a remedy. Thereupon St. Dorotheus called the dispenser and bade him at whatever hour this monk asked for breakfast or lunch to give him all he asked for. The dispenser obeyed and gave things with quite a good grace. Thereupon the patient began to do well and for some days stole nothing; but little by little he reverted to his bad habit. He went with many tears to St. Dorotheus to tell his fault and ask for a penance; for he had this good point about him, that he owned up to his faults at once—a very efficacious means to prevent their going on long. Dorotheus asked him: "Has not the dispenser given you what you asked? Has he ever said No to you?" "The dispenser treats me very well," he replied, "and all that I ask for he gives me; but I am ashamed to go so often to him." "Would

you be ashamed to come to me," said Dorotheus, "seeing that I know your temptation and you have told me all about it?" He said he would not; whereupon he told him to come to him, and he would give him all he wanted, and he must not steal any more. Dorotheus was infirmarian at the time and in a position to treat him well. This satisfied him for several days; but presently he returned to his evil habit and came with many tears and great confusion to tell his fault and ask for a penance. Said St. Dorotheus: "But how is this, brother? You are not ashamed of asking me, and I give you all you want; why do you go on stealing?" He answered: "Father, I don't know how it is, nor why I steal; the vice and evil habit carries me away. I am in no necessity, nor do I eat what I steal, but give it to the ass." And so it was found; for they went to his cell and there he had figs, grapes, apples, and bits of bread, hidden under his bed; and there he left them till they began to go bad; and then, not knowing what to do with them, he took them to the stable and threw them to the ass. Hence we see, says St. Dorotheus, the sad state to which passion and evil habits bring a man and what reason we have to take ourselves for sick men and enemies. This unhappy monk saw well that he was doing wrong and wept and distressed himself greatly for having done it, and yet it seems he could not restrain himself from doing it again. Wherefore the Abbot Niskeron well said that he who lets himself be carried away by passion and bad habits comes to be the servant and slave of the same.

CHAPTER XII

How the Exercise of Mortification Ought to Be Put in Practice

MORTIFICATION being the principal means available on our part to overcome ourselves, it will be well to descend to particulars as to how to put it into practice.

The general rule that is given in these things is to regard what is most necessary, and first of all endeavor to obtain that. Wherefore begin this exercise by profiting of those occasions of mortification that daily offer themselves, proceeding either from your superiors, from your brethren, or from anyone else. Receive all with a good will and make your profit of them, for so it must be as well for your own peace as for the edification of your neighbor.

We should by rights be so fervent in mortification, since it is so valuable to us, that we should go begging and importuning superiors to mortify us in this thing and in that, to command us what we have most repugnance for, and to penance and reprehend us in private and in public before all. But since you are not so fervent as that, at least receive with patience the occasions of mortification that offer and that God sends you for your exercise and advancement.

Many are the occasions that offer every day; and if one is careful and desirous of mortifying oneself, matter will always be at hand. Sometimes in matters of obedience you will think that they command you the hardest things, and that the whole burden is put upon you whilst there are others at hand who might do something. To every man in the discharge of his office things are apt to occur which give some special trouble and mortification. Well, then, profit by these occasions you have at hand, anticipate them, and believe that the difficulty you find in them is the cross you are to carry to follow Christ. At another time some other subject of mortification will arise from your meat, drink, lodging, or clothing; rejoice, as the rule bids you, that the worst things of the house are given to you. Another time it will happen that a superior will give you a penance or reprehend you when you think that you have not deserved it or, at least, that your fault was not so great as he makes it out and that the matter was reported to him otherwise than as it happened or with gross exaggerations. Be glad of all that; do not excuse yourself, do not complain, do not

try there and then to stand out in your own defense and vindicate your good name with this one and that.

Coming then to the occasions of mortification that arise on the part of our neighbors and brethren with whom we deal and converse, we shall find plenty, sometimes without their meaning or reverting to it and without fault of theirs, at other times through carelessness and negligence, although with no bad intention; and there are at times occasions in which it looks as though they disregarded you and made small account of you. Then if we go on to what is of the immediate sending of the Lord, as sicknesses, temptations and afflictions, and the unequal distribution of His gifts as well natural as supernatural, there are a countless number that every day present themselves without seeking. It is on these occasions that we must practise ourselves in the first place. Such mortifications often come of necessity, and we have to suffer them without seeking them. What we have got to do is to make a virtue of necessity, that suffering, we may suffer with profit. Besides the spiritual advantage there is here, we shall save ourselves much trouble if we take these things with good will. Often the hardship and difficulty which we feel is not so much in the things themselves as in the repugnance and contradiction of our will; and thus embracing them heartily, we shall greatly lighten the labor.

There are other mortifications which we have to do of our own will—they call them “active mortifications” to distinguish them from those already mentioned, which they call “passive,” which we have to suffer even without seeking them—for they are necessary, and thus they must rank with the mortifications which have to be taken in the first place. Of these, some are necessary for anyone to be a good Christian and save his soul, as is the mortifying of oneself in all that hinders the observance of the commandments of God. Others are necessary for one to be a good religious and gain perfection, as is the mortification of one-

self in all that hinders the observance of rules and getting things done well and perfectly. For it is certain that not only all sins, but all faults and imperfections whatever that we fall into in the way of virtue, come of want of mortification. They are all committed either to escape and not undergo some hardship that we feel in doing the right and better thing, or from unwillingness to abstain from some pleasure and delight which we experience in doing what is evil and imperfect. Let us run through them all, and we shall find that if we fail in obedience, in observance of rules, or in temperance, or in silence, or in modesty, or in patience, or in anything else, it is all for want of mortification, from our not braving the hardship that is annexed to this observance or not abstaining from the pleasure and delight which we take in the contrary. Thus, if you wish to be a good religious and attain perfection, you must mortify yourself in these things.

As for a man to be a good Christian and save his soul, it is necessary for him to mortify himself in all that he feels a craving for contrary to the law of God—and therefore Christ our Redeemer said: *Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself* (Matt. xvi. 24), and if he does not deny himself and mortify himself herein, he will not be a good Christian nor be saved—so to be a good religious and attain perfection, it is necessary for you to mortify yourself in all that can be a hindrance thereto. Run, then, through all the actions of the day from morning to night and see what hinders you from keeping the rules and doing your ordinary actions well and perfectly; and face this labor and mortify yourself in the inclination which you have to do a thing badly and imperfectly, and in this way every day your actions will be better and more perfect, and you also will be better and more perfect. The whole hub of our spiritual advancement consists in our bringing ourselves to the point of resolving on this.

Someone once asked the question: "How comes it that on the one hand God gives me good desires and on the other, when occasion offers, I find myself weak and fall into many faults and never succeed in arriving at perfection?" They to whom he proposed it said: "This comes of want of consideration; if you considered this and that, it would help you." And they gave him many considerations, and none of them did him any good. He betook himself to a very experienced old man, who answered him: "This springs not of want of consideration but of want of resolution." That is why we do not get on and never succeed in rooting out our faults and evil propensities. Bring yourself to the point of resolving to mortify yourself in what we have said, and in that way you will attain perfection.

CHAPTER XIII

How We Should Mortify Ourselves in Lawful Things, and in Necessary Things, Too

IT would seem that there was nothing more to be said on the practice and exercise of mortification but that we should exercise ourselves right well in the practice of the two manners of mortification above mentioned, since that would suffice for our being good and perfect religious. But that we may do these practices better and be more ready and disposed to do them, the saints and masters of spiritual life lay down another exercise of mortification in things that we might do lawfully. As a good Christian is not content with doing things of obligation that are necessary for salvation, but adds on others of devotion, which they call "works of supererogation"—he is not content with hearing Mass on days of precept, but he will hear it also on week-days; he recites the rosary of our Lady, and confesses and communicates frequently—so a good religious will not be content with keeping his rules and mortifying himself in all

that is necessary for their observance, but he must contrive to do other mortifications of supererogation to which he is not bound by rule, mortifying himself in some things not obligatory, but things that he might lawfully do.

St. Dorotheus says that there is nothing so helpful for advancement in virtue and gaining peace and tranquillity as curbing one's own will, and teaches us the way that we should take in mortifying ourselves in things that we might do lawfully. You are walking on one side of the street, and there comes over you an impulse to turn your head and look across the road—don't look. You are in company, and there occurs to you a remark very much to the point, likely, you think, to make you pass for a discreet and judicious person—don't say it. The saint gives other examples, going into such details as the following. You have a mind to know what we are going to have for dinner; don't try to find out. You see some new article of furniture in the house; you have a mind to know who sent this or who brought it, whether it is a purchase or a present—don't ask. A guest comes; at once you have a mind to ask: "Who has come? Where does he come from? Where is he going? On what business?"—don't try to know; mortify yourself on that point. This practice, St. Dorotheus says, helps greatly to the creation of a habit of denying our own will; for if we accustom ourselves to curb it in these small things, we shall shortly come to having no will of our own in greater matters. As those who are in training for war practise in time of peace what they have to do in war, making trial of themselves in tournaments and conflicts, which for the time being are sham fights, because so it is necessary to make them dexterous and in practice when real fighting comes; so the religious should accustom himself to mortify and curb his will in lawful things that thus he may be afterwards quick and ready and well trained to mortify himself in regard of things unlawful. St. Bonaventure also teaches this practice of mortification in small

things and things that we might lawfully do, giving the example of plucking or not plucking a flower when you are walking in the garden because, though there is no harm in plucking it, yet to let it alone on purpose to mortify yourself is more pleasing to God. And he says that a servant of God should often say in his heart: "For your love, O Lord, I will not see this, nor hear that, nor taste that morsel, nor take just now this sort of recreation."

Of our Father Francis Borgia it is related that, when he was duke, he was much attached to the sport of hawking and took great delight therein; and when he went to fly a heron, just in the nick of time, when the falcon stooped on her lure and killed it, he would lower his eyes and rob them of their lure, depriving himself of that gratification and enjoyment which with so much labor he had sought all day long. St. Gregory says that it is proper to the servants of God to deprive themselves of lawful things in order to be further removed from things unlawful. On this account those holy Fathers of the Desert had such esteem of this practice and brought up their disciples to it, making them give up their work and do work they had no taste for—in little things and things they might have done without sin or any imperfection, that in all things they might deny their own will and be armed for greater things. And of him who in these light and easy mortifications gave good proof of himself, they had good hopes that he would reach perfection; and they had a poor opinion of anyone else who showed otherwise, thinking that a will accustomed to do what it likes, even in small matters and things of little importance will prove very disinclined afterwards to deny itself in greater things. Hence the Society took the practice which it uses, especially in the beginning with novices, of occupying them in different exercises and offices, making them leave what they have begun and undo what they have done and go back to do it again, that they may not grow up headstrong and self-willed, but from the beginning may

be accustomed to deny their will and their own judgment.

But the saints go further in this exercise of mortification. Not content with accustoming us to deny our own will in lawful things that we might do without sin and any imperfection, they advise us even in those very things that we are bound to attend to, to accustom ourselves to mortify and deny our own will. But someone will say: "How can this be? Are we to give over doing what we are bound to do, to mortify ourselves?" I say no, by no means; that would be ill done: *it is not lawful to do evil that good may come of it* (Rom. iii. 8). How, then, is this to be? The saints have found for it a marvelous contrivance, and it is the teaching of St. Paul. Mark and observe, they say, that you are to do nothing, think nothing, say nothing on a main motive of accomplishing your own will or desires; but before you eat, you must mortify the appetite of gluttony and not eat because you have an appetite and want food, but in obedience to God, Who wishes and commands you to eat to sustain life, as did the Abbot Isidore, of whom Paladius relates that he wept when he went to dinner, and went only out of obedience.

Before you study, you should mortify your desire to study, and then study because God wishes it and commands it and not of your own will and taste. Before you preach or lecture in the professor's chair, mortify the craving and inclination that you have thereto and do not do it to suit your own taste and desire, but because so you are bidden and it is the will of God. In the same way in all other things you must abandon the proper motion of your own will, and do them because God so requires. It is not reasonable that things should lead us captive to go their way, but we should draw them to ourselves and to God, doing them purely for Him. This is what the Apostle says: *Whether ye eat, or drink, or do anything else whatsoever, do all to the glory of God* (I Cor. x. 31). This is a very chief point, a point of high spirituality. We must not do

our actions nor discharge the office which we hold for our own taste and inclination, but purely for God, because He so wishes and commands. We must accustom ourselves to do in all things not our own will but that of God, and delight in them, not because the things are in themselves agreeable or to our taste or conformable to our inclination, but because we do in them the will of God. Whoever shall live in this manner, will not only become accustomed to mortify and deny his own will, but will be doing the will of God in all things, which is a very high exercise of the love of God and of great profit and perfection, as we have said elsewhere.

Wide enough the field that we have opened for this exercise! Thus, whoever shall wish to make his particular examen on mortifying and denying his will—and a very profitable examen that will be—should go little by little by the steps and degrees that we have laid down in the chapters on Examination of Conscience. To begin with, we may make our own particular examen on mortifying ourselves on the occasions that offer without our seeking them, in which there is enough to do for some days and even for many, especially if we go the length of bearing things not only with patience but with joy and cheerfulness, which is the third and most perfect degree of mortification. The second step would be to mortify our will in what disturbs and hinders us from doing well the thing that we have to do to be good religious and keep our rules and proceed with edification, which things are countless. The third step would be to mortify ourselves in some things that we may lawfully do, in this way to accustom and habituate ourselves to deny our own will and be the more ready and better prepared for the time when other and greater occasions shall offer. We may purpose to mortify ourselves in these things so many times in the morning and so many times in the afternoon, beginning with a smaller number and afterwards increasing them according to the progress we make.

And the more frequent these mortifications are, the better, even though they were to complete the full number of their particular examen beads, as we have known some in the Society to do, who mortified themselves that number of times every day and even went beyond the number, as was well approved by the progress they made. Fourthly, we may make this particular examen on those same things that we are bound to do, taking care to do them, not because we like them or have a taste for them, but because such is the will of God, which is a practice that may last for a lifetime, being a thing of great perfection. This examen according to these points may be made by way of conformity to the will of God, taking all things as coming from His hand, and sent us by the loving-kindness of a Father for our greater good and profit. We may reckon that Christ Himself speaks to us, saying: "Child, I would have thee now do or suffer this." In this way it will be easier and sweeter, more profitable and effectual and of greater perfection, because it will be an exercise of the love of God, which renders all things easy and sweet. That reason: "This is the will of God; God here and now wishes and has a mind for this," is a convincing and conclusive argument; it ties feet and hands, and leaves no escape.

We read of our Father Francis Borgia that he once set out late from Valladolid for Simancas, where was the house of probation. It was snowing heavily, and there was blowing a very cold and chilly wind. He arrived late at night, at a time when the novices were already in bed. There he was a long time knocking at the gate, while heavy flakes of snow were falling upon him. As they were in their first sleep, and the gate was far from the house, he got no answer. After a long time they heard him and opened to him. The novices were much distressed at having kept their father so long waiting, and to see him pierced and shivering with cold. The father then said to them with a very gracious and cheerful countenance: "Do not grieve,

my brothers, for I assure you that the Lord has given me great consolation while I was waiting. I was thinking that it was the Lord Who aimed the snowflakes at me and sent the icy winds to blow upon me; and that all that He does He does with infinite delight and satisfaction to Himself; and that I ought to rejoice, considering the satisfaction of God in chastising and afflicting me, and be glad of the joy that He took in that work, as a lion or other brute animal is harried to pieces before a great prince solely to give him pleasure." After this manner we ought to take all occasions of mortification, and this should be our joy and satisfaction in them, the joy and satisfaction of God.

CHAPTER XIV

*That We Should Chiefly Mortify Ourselves in That Vice
or Passion Which Has the Greater Sway Over Us and
Makes Us Fall into Our Greatest Faults*

IN the First Book of Kings Holy Scripture relates that God commanded Saul by the Prophet Samuel utterly to destroy Amalek, leaving, as they say, neither chick nor child, great or small, nor men nor animals nor herds. And, says Holy Writ, *Saul and the people spared King Agag, and the fattest of the cattle large and small, and all that was precious and valuable; but all that was cheap and worn out and worthless they destroyed* (I Kings xv. 9). So there are some who mortify themselves in little trifling things; but in greater things, which are important and make more difference to them, they spare themselves and remain quite alive to the quick. For the information of such persons I say that the chief thing that we should set our eyes upon, to mortify it and offer it to God, should be the most precious. Samuel went thereupon to Saul and reproved him severely on the part of God for what he had done. He made them bring Agag, King of Amalek, before him. *And Agag was*

brought forth, very fat and shaky, and Samuel hewed him to pieces in Gulgala before the Lord (I Kings xv. 32-33). He made a sacrifice of him to God. This, then, must be the chief thing that you are to sacrifice and offer to God by mortification—this Agag of your swollen vanity and pride that has most sway over you, this craving to be regarded and thought much of, this impatience, this asperity of temper that is habitual to you.

There are some who seem to place all their care and all their holiness and perfection in the exterior, practising a modesty and composure that is very edifying and not letting appear in their exterior any fault; but of interior mortification, which is the most precious and sublime, they take no account, but are all alive and sensitive in respect of their own will and judgment, their honor and reputation. To these we may say, in its measure, what Christ said to the scribes and Pharisees: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who are at much pains with the exterior cleanness of the platters and cups with which ye eat and drink, and within are full of uncleanness, of theft and rapine. Blind Pharisee, make first the inside clean, that the outside may come to be clean also (Matt. xxiii. 25-26).* Cleanse and mortify first the interior, that the exterior may be pure and clean; for if this exterior modesty does not spring from that which is within, from inward peace and maturity of heart, it will be all hypocrisy and pretense. Be not, says Christ our Redeemer, like the whitened sepulchers, that look very fair outside and within are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. And in the same chapter, even more to our point, He reproves the same scribes and Pharisees, saying: *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, who take care not to let go untithed the mint, and the anise, and the cummin, and omit the weightier things of the law, right judgment, mercy, and fidelity to God, and take no account of them (Matt. xxiii. 23).*

This is literally what we have been just saying, that there are some who take great care to mortify themselves in mat-

ters of small moment which cost them nothing; but in what hurts them, in what goes to the quick, there is no touching them. That, then, must be the chief thing that we are to mortify—that passion, or that vice or inclination or bad habit that puts us in greater dangers and makes us fall into greater faults. We see by experience that each one commonly is wont to feel in himself one or two things which alone or chiefly make war upon him, hinder his advancement, and are the cause of all his disorders. We say, then, that it is on this that each one should principally fix his eyes, to rid and root it out of himself by mortification. On the same account we are wont to insist that the particular examen should be made also on this matter, and that it should be mainly dwelt upon in meditation as being each one's principal necessity.

CHAPTER XV

That We Ought Not to Omit Mortifications in Small Things, and How Profitable and Pleasing to God These Mortifications Are

WE should set our eyes on greater things in such a way as not to leave smaller things unattended to. This admonition is directed against some who drop small mortifications and take no account of them, thinking that they are trifles and that progress and perfection do not lie there. That is a very great mistake. Christ our Redeemer also warns us of it in that very reproof which He gave to the scribes and Pharisees. He did not reprove them for taking care of those trifles, but for leaving the weightier things of the law undone. Nay, He adds at once that it is needful to do also those little things. *Little things, He says, must be done, but greater things not omitted* (Matt. xxiii. 23). We often dwell on the importance of taking account of minute and small things and not neglecting them; and in truth it is a point of such importance that it deserves to be often

spoken of, that such great evil may not gain entrance to us as commonly does come in by these small openings. For the present we will only say what makes for our purpose, which shall be to declare two things: first, the great good there is in these small mortifications; secondly, the great evil and loss that may accrue to us if we neglect them.

To start with the first point, how pleasing these mortifications are to God though they be in small things, and of what value and merit they are before Him, that may be well understood from this consideration. In mortification there is not so much to be regarded the thing that we do as the denying and curbing therein of our own will. This is properly that self-mortification and self-denial which Christ our Redeemer asks for in the holy Gospel (Matt. xvi. 24). Now this self-will is as well denied and curbed in small things as in great things, and sometimes more so when they go more against the grain. We experience this many times, that we feel more difficulty over little things than we felt over others that were greater; for, as they say and say very truly, mortification is not so much in the things as in the repugnance of our own will. Thus in every mortification, even in small things, we offer and sacrifice to God our own will, denying it and curbing it for His love and giving Him the most precious and most cherished and best-loved thing that we have got; for we have nothing of greater value or that we cherish and prize more than our own will; and giving that, we give all.

St. Ambrose weighs to this effect that action of David when, being in the field against the Philistines, as Holy Writ tells he desired and said: *Oh, that someone would give me a little water of the cistern of Bethlehem* (I Chron. xi. 17), which was in the rear of the enemy. Hearing this, three gallant knights broke through the midst of the army of the Philistines and brought back a vessel of water from that cistern. And Holy Scripture says: *He would not drink, but sacrificed and offered it to the Lord, pouring it on the*

ground (I Chron. xi. 19). A great thing, forsooth, and a great sacrifice, to offer to God a pitcher of water! St. Ambrose says it was a great sacrifice and very agreeable to God; and enough that Holy Scripture relates it for an exploit of David to understand that it was great. But why was it great? Do you know why? says St. Ambrose. He overcame nature, curbed his will in not drinking when he was thirsty, and gave an example to the whole army to endure the thirst. It was not the mere pitcher of water that he offered. It was his will that he offered and sacrificed to God, though in small things; and therefore it was a sacrifice of great value and very agreeable in the sight of His Divine Majesty.

St. Gregory, and St. Ambrose also, gives another example of the same David to this purpose. Holy Scripture relates (II Kings vi.; I Chron. xv.) how David brought the Ark of the Covenant to his city of Sion with a grand procession and solemnity; and as when here [in Spain, A.D. 1606] the procession takes place on Corpus Christi Day, the peasants and common people go before the Blessed Sacrament with their dances and reels, so it is to be believed, says St. Gregory, that on that occasion the multitude and common people danced before the Ark of God. Then the most potent and mighty King David, forgetful of his authority and grandeur, divested himself of his royal robes and joined the dancers, and began to dance, curvet, and play on a musical instrument, *stripping himself bare as a strolling player*, as his wife Michol said, just as if he were a common jester out to give amusement.

St. Gregory can never cease wondering at this deed of David, and says: "I know not what others may think of the deeds and exploits of David—let them think what they like; but as for me, I admire more David dancing reels before the Ark, like a man of vulgar and base condition, than when I hear of his tearing in pieces bears and rending lions or of his felling the giant Goliath with one small

stone and vanquishing the Philistines; because there he overcame others, but here he overcame himself;" and it is more to overcome oneself than to overcome others.

Let us, then, set great value on these mortifications and beware of despising them, lest that befall us which befell Michol, who was shocked and indignant at this behavior of David and despised him in her heart for it and afterwards reproached him for it to his face, for which God afflicted her with barrenness, so that she never had a son all her life long. See if this be not the cause of your barrenness and dryness as well in prayer as in dealing with your neighbor—the fact being that people do not catch on with you and your words do not catch on with them, and thus you have no spiritual children—that you are ashamed to do little mortifications and disdain to go to the superior with small things, thinking that to be an affair for babes and novices and that the like is not for you. Much more ought they to fear this chastisement who make game of others whom they see very observant, mark them as scrupulous and petty-minded persons, and make jokes and witticisms at their expense. This is a thing that may do much harm, and we ought to make great scruple of doing it, for it is doing what in us lies to withdraw others from virtue. Oh, what a good answer David gave Michol: *I will play before the Lord who has chosen and preferred me before thy father, I will sport and dance and demean myself more and more* (II Kings vi. 22); and no mockery or murmuring at me shall make me desist from it. "Fine sport is that," says St. Bernard, "at which Michol is angry and God is pleased; fine sport which is ridiculous to men but a fair spectacle to angels! This is the sport which he followed who said: *We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men* (I Cor. iv. 9). Let us, then, also follow this sport, and make no account of what they say; *Ludamus et illudamur.*" In this way we shall be a spectacle to astonish the world, and win the admiration of angels and greatly please God.

CHAPTER XVI

*Of the Harm and Mischief That Comes of Neglecting
Mortification in Small Things*

FROM what has been said it may readily be understood what harm and mischief may ensue from the neglect of mortification in little matters and taking no care about them. We should not look so much at the smallness and minuteness of the thing in which we omit to mortify ourselves as at the fact that we have no mind to deny or curb our will for the love of God, not even in this small matter. And there is another very great and considerable mischief; it is that hereby a man goes on giving license to his will to have his own way in other things also, and thus he becomes wilful and headstrong, fomenting and feeding his own will. The man does not understand the evil and mischief that he is doing herein. This self-will is at first a little lion cub, but at this rate it will grow and become a fierce and masterful lion that cannot be brought to reason. We well know that self-will is the cause and root of all evils and sins and of hell itself. *Cesset propria voluntas, et infernus non erit*, says St. Bernard—"Let there be no self-love and there will be no hell." Now by these mortifications a man systematically curbs his own will, refusing it permission to come out with its own in everything that it desires, which license is apt to be the root and cause of all sins.

Richard of St. Victor says that, since the devil labors to overcome us in small things, thereby to weaken us and so overcome us in matters of grave fault, it is but right and proper that we should labor also to overcome ourselves and mortify ourselves frequently in little things, thereby to shut the door in the devil's face, that he may not overcome us in greater things. He advises us to begin with these small things, that thus we may gather strength by practice and from victory in smaller things mount up little by

little to victory in greater. Cassian also is of the same advice, and gives an example, how, when a motion of anger comes upon you at your pen's not being good or your knife's not cutting well or other like things, the thing to do, he says, is to mortify and repress these disorderly motions though they be in small things, since by this victory, when grave occasions occur afterwards of impatience and injurious language from one's neighbors, the servant of God finds himself possessed of sufficient strength to mortify himself and preserve charity and peace of heart.

Besides, there is another advantage in these small mortifications voluntarily taken up, that thereby another great loss and danger is escaped, as we are taught by the holy man Eusebius, as Theodoret relates in his "*Historia Religiosa*." This holy man practised himself much in them; and when asked why, he answered: "I am training myself against the arts and wiles of the devil and contriving hereby that the great temptations with which he might assail me, of pride, lust, envy, and the like may be turned on to these little things, in which, if I am beaten, I shall not lose much, and if I win, the devil will be greatly put out and affronted, seeing that he could not beat me even in these small things." Let this be well observed, because it is a truth of which God's servants have abundant experience. Understand that, while you progress in this practice of mortification in little things, the devil's temptations will be turned upon that, and your temptations will usually turn on these little things—"Shall I do that mortification? Shall I overcome that repugnance or let it have its way?" Supposing once in awhile you are beaten on this point, you will not lose much. But if you drop this practice, and make it no longer your object to fight with the devil and against the flesh in these small matters, devil and flesh will make war on you with greater temptations, in which if you are beaten, you are undone.

St. Augustine has a story how a Catholic, being provoked by flies that continually tormented him, was visited by a Manichean, to whom he recounted his annoyance. The Manichean thought he had found a fit occasion to insinuate his error, which was, that there were two origins or causes of things: the one of invisible things, which was God; the other, of visible things, which was the devil. (It is against this error that these words are inserted in the Creed: "Of all things visible and invisible.") The Manichean therefore asked him: "Who do you believe was the creator of flies?" The Catholic, who found himself so tormented by these creatures and saw them in such an evil light, durst not say it was God. "But if it was not God," replied the Manichean, "who was it that made them?" The other replied that he thought it was the devil. The Manichean still pressed the argument more home. "But if the devil," he said, "made the flies, what about the bee, who is a bit bigger than the fly; who made her?" The Catholic durst not say that God had created the bee and not the fly, there being very little between them; so he answered that if God had not created the flies, probably He had not created the bees either. The Manichean, perceiving this, by little and little drew him on further, passing from the bee to the grasshopper, a little bigger than the bee; from the grasshopper to the lizard, from the lizard to a bird, from a bird to a sheep, thence to an ox, then to an elephant, and last of all to man himself. "And hereby he persuaded this poor man," says St. Augustine, "that God had not created man." See into what an abyss of misery he fell because he could not patiently suffer one small mortification caused by the biting of the flies! So, says St. Augustine, do you beware lest the devil deceive you when you are tempted and annoyed by flies. Bird-catchers, he says, are wont to put flies on their spring-traps to catch certain birds; so did the devil with this unhappy man. See, then, that he does not catch you also when you are annoyed and tempted, sad and melancholy over little

things, for with these flies the devil is apt to catch and lead men little by little to greater things.

CHAPTER XVII

Three Important Admonitions Upon This Subject

THERE are here three admonitions to be given, regarding three sorts of persons, for the consolation of the one, and the disenchantment of the other two. All men are not born with the same dispositions. Some natures are hard and feel great difficulty and contradiction of the flesh against works of virtue; they are thereby much afflicted and think all is lost. It is to such as these to whom I address the first advice I have to give, which is to let them know that there is no sin or imperfection in these repugnances and movements against reason, but only in following and acting upon them. Involuntary motions, bad thoughts occurring against purity, against faith, or against any other virtue whatsoever, for which many afflict themselves very much, are not sins. Wherefore the saints bid us not to put ourselves at all in pain for them; it is not the feeling these impressions but the consenting to them which makes the sin. When you loathe these temptations and endeavor to resist them, and do not entertain them or take satisfaction in them, they are no sin, but on the contrary an occasion of greater merit.

So of inclinations and evil emotions that we have of our nature, some more, others less, from which arise such evil stirrings in our appetite and such repugnances and reluctances for virtue—it is not in this point that one is good or evil, perfect or imperfect, for the thing is natural and not in our own control; it is the inheritance of sin. St. Paul, though he was St. Paul, felt the contradiction and rebellion of his flesh, and said: *I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me cap-*

tive in the law of sin that is in my members (Rom. vii. 23). St. Augustine explains to this effect the verse of the psalm, *Be ye angry, and sin not* (Psalm iv. 6). "That is, though there arise in your heart some first motion, which now, being part of the penalty of sin, is not in our power, at least let not the will consent to it, but *in mind let us serve the law of God, though yet in flesh we serve the law of sin* (Rom. vii. 25). Though there arise in your appetite the movement of impatience and anger, do not let yourself be carried away or consent to it, and you shall not sin." Those cows that drew the Ark of the Covenant bellowed as they went along because they had taken their calves from them, which they naturally loved; yet for all that they failed not to go straight on their way without turning either to the right or to the left. Do you the same. Persist in the straight way of virtue without permitting yourself to be put out of your way by the bellowing of flesh and blood, and herein you may be perfect.

The difference that there is between spiritual persons who labor after perfection and carnal and sensual persons who think not at all of it, does not consist in feeling or not feeling these motions and contradictions of their flesh, but in the fact that the one let themselves be carried away by them, the others do not. The live fish goes upstream and the dead fish downstream; so to know whether you are spiritually alive or dead, see whether you work upstream, whether you go against the current of your passions, or whether you let yourself be carried away by them downstream. The spiritual man hears not the cries and barkings of gluttony and the sensual appetite, nor lets himself be carried away thereby. *He hearkeneth not to the voice of the exactor*, says Job (xxxix. 7). Job calls the stomach *the exactor*, because it cries for more than is necessary. This is the whole point, says St. Gregory, not to hearken or consent to cravings that arise. Far from being discouraged by these evil inclinations, we should animate ourselves to

make them the occasion of our gaining a greater crown from these as from other temptations. So St. Augustine, preaching on the Ascension and exhorting us all to mount up to heaven with Christ, assigns as other means to do that our passions and evil inclinations. And if asked how passions can help one to ascend into heaven, he answered that it was by the individual's making generous efforts to subject them and get them under. In this way we shall make of our passions steps to mount on high; they will be below us to lift us up; they will be put under our feet to serve as steps to climb up to heaven.

We read in the Life of our holy Father that, being naturally hot-tempered, he had so overcome and changed his nature by the help and assistance of grace that they thought him to be of a phlegmatic temperament. Plutarch relates of Socrates that there came to see him a physiognomist, who could tell the natural inclinations of anyone from his outward mien and countenance, and pronounced that this man was evilly inclined to lewdness, gluttony, drunkenness, and many other vices. The disciples and friends of Socrates fell into a great rage and were ready to lay hands on the man, but Socrates restrained them, saying: "The man is in the right, for I should be such a one as he makes me out were I not given to philosophy and the practice of virtue." But if a philosopher who had only the assistance of the light of nature was able after such a manner to overcome his bad inclinations, what may not a Christian or a religious man be able to do by the help of divine grace, as grace is more powerful than nature?

There are another sort of persons who are naturally well inclined. *There has fallen to their portion a good soul* (Wisdom viii. 9), as though they had not sinned in Adam, as used to be said of St. Bonaventure by his master, Alexander of Hales. Their disposition is so good and sweet that every duty that meets them seems to be already done to their hand; they feel not in their flesh those contradictions

and repugnances which others feel, but on the contrary they say: "Talk to me of the difficulties of religious life? Why, I find none!" It is to these to whom the second admonition appertains, which they must make use of to undeceive themselves. If God has given you such a happy constitution and good nature that you do not feel these difficulties and hardly know what a troublesome temptation is, be not puffed up or vain on that account, since this is not any virtue that you have gained, but the natural temperament with which you were born. Now virtue and spiritual progress are not measured by the cast of countenance nor exterior comportment, nor by gentleness of disposition, but by individual effort and by victory gained over self. This is the certain and sure measure of each one's spiritual progress. And therefore one who is naturally hot-tempered does more when he resists and overcomes this passion of anger than you who find everything done for you. Plutarch praises Alexander the Great above all the monarchs of earth, saying that others were born to monarchy, but he gained monarchy with his right arm and spear and with many wounds received in divers battles. Such as have rendered themselves masters over their passions at the point of the sword, if I may say so, are more worthy of praise than those who are born with sweet and peaceable tempers and never have any provocation to fight at all. Wherefore neither the sweetness of your humor nor the natural heat and impetuosity of another, ought to make you esteem yourself the more or him the less; but on the contrary you must thereby take more occasion to humble yourself, acknowledging that what appears to be virtue in you is not so, but a pure effect of your natural temperament; whereas, in the case of your neighbor, everything that he does is virtue. You have made no progress because you have overcome yourself in nothing; while your neighbor has made great progress because he has withstood himself and overcome himself in many things. The fact of his encountering harder opposition and

having a more rebellious nature to overcome, makes him take more care of himself and live with greater caution and fervor, and thus he grows continually in virtue. But to you your good natural endowment is an occasion of negligence and continual tepidity; and as you meet no enemies on your path, you become loutish and lazy.

It will be well also herein to consider what you would have been if God had given you a strong and difficult nature as He has given to that other, and to believe that the faults you would have committed would have been more numerous and greater than his. If with such a good natural disposition and so excellent an endowment you commit so many faults and are so tepid and remiss, what would have happened if you had encountered the strong oppositions and contradictions that he has had to meet? When God does not permit temptations to come upon you, we say you ought to think it is because of your weakness and your not having virtue enough to stand so much. So, too, you should make up your mind that it was a particular providence and mercy of the Lord to give you that good natural disposition and good endowment, because you would not have had virtue enough to overcome that strong and violent nature which your neighbor has. Thus you will preserve in yourself humility on the one hand, and on the other a good opinion of your brother.

The third admonition is for the undeceiving of a third class of persons, who feel not within themselves these repugnances and contradictions nor this rebellion of the flesh, but reckon themselves to be at peace, not because they are mortified, nor again because they have a good natural disposition and an excellent constitution like the former, but because they make no effort to restrain themselves, to deny and overcome themselves, but their delight is to gratify their desire and inclination, and on this line of action they feel not those repugnances and contradictions. They fancy they have peace, *saying peace, peace, and it is*

no peace (Jerem. vi. 4), but a false and fictitious tranquility. On that text of St. Paul (Rom. vii. 23) : *I feel another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me captive by the law of sin*, the glorious Augustine observes: "This war and contradiction of the flesh against the spirit and of the spirit against the flesh is experienced by those who are endeavoring to acquire virtue and root out vices from themselves." So we see that worldly persons do not understand this talk of mortification, for it is their practice to follow their own will in all its caprices, taking that for their rule and their law. They do not know what it is to say no to themselves and to restrain their cravings, and so they experience no war nor contradiction within themselves, because there is nothing there to stand in the way of what they are bent upon. But those who aim at a spiritual life, and labor to acquire true virtues and root out their vices and bad inclinations, feel at once this war and contradiction of the flesh. As the bird does not know that it is caught till it tries to get out of the net, so man does not know the strength of his vices and evil inclinations till he labors to rid himself of them. In the embracing of virtue the contradiction of the contrary vice declares itself.

We read in the acts of the holy Fathers that one day a monk proposed this question to one of the old Fathers: "How comes it to pass that I feel not within myself those combats and that stress of temptation that others suffer?" To whom the holy man made this answer: "It is because you are like a great gate, by which he comes in who will and he goes out who will, without your knowing what is done and what goes on in the house. You keep a very lax conscience, little guard over your heart, little circumspection in your doings, little recollection in your senses, so do not wonder at what you ask me. But if you would keep the gate of your heart shut, if you hindered bad thoughts from entering, you would then see what a war they would

make on you to get in." If, therefore, you feel not this war within yourself nor any of these combats of your flesh, take heed lest this does not happen simply because you take your own way in all things, and use no endeavor to contradict your appetites and root out your vices and bad inclinations.

CHAPTER XVIII

*That It Is Always Necessary to Exercise Ourselves in
Mortification, How Good and Advanced Soever We
May Be in Virtue*

ST. BERNARD says that we must always carry the pruning-hook of mortification in our hands, pruning and mortifying, and that there is no person who stands not in need of pruning or retrenching something or other, how much soever he be mortified and think himself advanced. "Believe me," says he, "that which is cut, sprouts anew; that which is driven out, returns; that which is quenched, flares up again; and that which is lulled to sleep, wakes up once more. It is not sufficient, therefore," adds the saint, "to have pruned once; we must use the knife often, and even always, if possible; for if you will not deceive yourself, you will always find something to cut and to retrench within yourself." The hedges which we see in certain gardens furnish us with a very fit comparison for this subject. The myrtle and the box are artistically cut here into the figure of a lion, there into that of an eagle, and there into a man on horseback. But if the gardener did not go always cutting and pruning the shoots that keep growing, in a few days there would be no lion left, nor eagle either, nor man on horseback, because the shrub goes on growing according to its nature and is naturally ever sprouting afresh. So here, though you be a lion or an eagle, though you fancy that you are very strong and master of yourself, if you do not go always pruning, retrenching, and

mortifying, you will soon be neither lion nor eagle, but a monster, because we have here within us a root of contrariety that is ever sprouting and growing according to its own nature, so that there will always be something to mortify. "However much progress you have made, you deceive yourself in thinking that your vices are dead whereas they are only held in check. Whether you will or no, you have within you the Jebusite. The enemy is always with you; you may check and keep him down, but you cannot finally cast him out"—*Quantumlibet in hoc corpore manens profeceris, erras si vitia putas emortua, et non magis suppressa. Velis, nolis, intra fines tuos habitat Iebusaeus, subjugari potest, sed non exterminari* (St. Bernard). St. Paul says: *I know that there dwelleth not in my flesh any good.* This would be saying little, says St. Bernard, if he did not add: *For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, I do; and yet it is not I who do it, but the sin that dwelleth in me* (Rom. vii. 18-19). Either, then, prefer yourself to the Apostle, says St. Bernard, or you must confess that there dwells in you a vicious and evil inclination and that you have ever something to mortify.

The holy Abbot Ephrem in confirmation of this says: "The war of soldiers is soon over, but a monk's fight lasts until he passes away to the Lord"—*Bellum militum breve, sed monachi pugna quoadusque ad Dominum migret.* There is much more to do in mortifying and checking our affections and passions than in cutting the hardest stones. For besides the fact that the stone offers the workman no such resistance or contradiction as is found in ourselves, it never returns again to its primitive roughness once it has been cut; but our affections and passions change very frequently and are apt to revive and reawaken, and it is necessary to return to the task of repressing them time after time. St. Jerome on that text of the prophet, *Sing ye to the Lord on the harp* (Psalm xcvi. 5), says that, as a harp makes no good music nor harmony till all the strings are in tune, and

one single string broken or not in accord with the rest makes a discord, so one single passion in us, discordant and unmortified, will prevent our soul from making good music in the ears of God. *Sing to tune on a harp of ten strings* (Psalm xxxii. 2). But to bring this well about, it is clear how necessary it is to keep up this exercise.

On this account those ancient Fathers, as St. John Climacus relates, proved and exercised in many sorts of mortifications and humiliations even the most perfect among their number. And they gave a good reason for this, because it often happens that those who seem very perfect and great endurors of hardship, if their superiors cease to prove and exercise them, regarding them as men of consummate virtue, come in time to lose or abate that modesty and endurance which they had. For however good land may be, rich and fertile, yet if left uncultivated and unwatered it is apt to go wild and barren and yield a crop of thorns and thistles; so let a soul be ever so advanced in perfection, yet if it is left without the watering and the labor of mortification and the practice of endurance, it will become a wild and barren soil and will produce thorns of evil and impure thoughts and a false and deceitful sense of security. Thus we all stand in need of mortification: not only such as have any bad and corrupt inclinations, but even those whose inclinations are very good; not only the perfect and beginners, but also the most ancient and perfect; not only those who have sinned, but those who have preserved their baptismal innocence; some to gain virtue, some to keep it. He who rides a horse, however good and gentle it be, always takes bridle and spur, because, after all, it is but a horse.

If anyone will come after me, says our Savior, *let him deny himself and take up his cross* (Matt. xvi. 24). St. Luke adds, *Take up his cross daily* (Luke ix. 23). You ought to let no day pass without curbing your own will in something. Any day that you let pass without doing this, says St. John Climacus, count it for a great default; reckon

that you have lost that day and that you have not been a religious that day. *Amici, perdidimus diem*—"Friends, we have lost a day," said the Roman emperor [Titus]; we have not been kings or emperors, for we have bestowed no favor on anyone. But it is much more proper for a religious man to mortify himself and deny his own will than for kings and emperors to bestow favors, for this it is to be a religious, to do what you do not want to do and leave undone what you do want to do.

Our Father Francis Borgia has left us a good example in this as in all other things. He used to say that without doubt his meat would be bitter and disagreeable to him any day that he did not chastise his body with some good penance or mortification; and he added that it would be a grief to him throughout life if he knew that death would surprise him on a day on which he had not done some penance and mortified his senses. Thus he let no day pass on which he did not mortify himself; and he prayed and besought the Lord to do him this favor, that comforts should be to him a torment and a cross, and afflictions a comfort, which is the third and highest degree of mortification; and he used to say that he should have no comfort until he had obtained this of our Lord. He lived in perpetual watchfulness, making war on his body, and was always finding something wherein to mortify and maltreat it. All the things that enabled him to afflict it he called his friends. If the sun distressed him on a journey, he would say: "Oh, what good assistance our friend renders us!" He said the same of the frost and wind and rain in the rigor of winter, and of the pain of the gout and attacks of the heart and of those who persecuted and said evil things of him; all these he called friends because they helped him to vanquish and subdue his body, which he held for his deadly enemy. And not content with the mortifications and afflictions that came in his way, he went seeking new contrivances to mortify himself. Sometimes he put sand and pebbles in his shoes to hurt his

feet when walking. In summer he hung about in the sun, and in winter in the snow and ice. He laid his temples bare with pulling out the hairs. When he could not take the discipline, he tormented his flesh with pinches and other artifices. Even in sicknesses he sought means to add aches to aches and pains to pains. His purgative draughts, however bitter they were, he sipped as though they were a plate of nourishing soup. He chewed bitter pills, and broke them up between his teeth, and kept them in his mouth a long time. In this way did he mortify and torment his senses and crucify his flesh, and so he came to arrive at the perfection of sanctity at which he did arrive.

CHAPTER XIX

Of Two Means That Will Make the Practice of Mortification Easy and Sweet, Which Are the Grace of God and His Holy Love

IT remains to treat of some means to aid us in this practice of mortification, so necessary for us, means that will make it not only easy and bearable but sweet and pleasant. The first and chiefest means to this must be the grace of the Lord, whereby everything is made easy and light. The Apostle Paul was much vexed by a temptation and earnestly besought God to take it away. The Lord answered him: *My grace is enough for thee* (II Cor. xii. 9). By the grace of God he felt himself so strengthened as to say: *I can do all things in him that strengthened me* (Phil. iv. 13). *Not I, but the grace of God with me* (I Cor. xv. 10). The Lord does not leave us alone in this labor of mortification; He aids us to carry the burden. And on this account He calls His law a *yoke*, because two bear it. Christ conjoins Himself with us to bear it, and who will be frightened in such company and with such support? Let it not seem to you difficult, because the lesser half of it falls on

you. For this reason He says that, though it is a yoke, it is *sweet*; and though it is a burden, it is *light* (Matt. xi. 30). For though, considering our nature and the smallness of our strength, it is heavy, and that is what is denoted by the name of yoke and burden, yet by the grace of God it is easy and sweet because the Lord Himself lightens it to us, as He promises by the Prophet Osee: *I will be as one who lighteneth the yoke and removeth the halter from their jaws* (Osee xi. 4). And by Isaias He says: *The yoke shall rot for the power of the oil* (x. 27). Mortification seems a heavy yoke and burden, but so great is the favor and grace of God, signified by the oil, that the yoke will rot and become soft till you find it no longer irksome, nor even feel it.

St. Bernard in his First Sermon on the Consecration of a Church says: "As in the consecration of a church this ceremony is observed of anointing the crosses on the walls with holy oil, so does our Lord with the souls of religious. By the spiritual unction of His grace He anoints and softens for them the crosses of penance and mortification. Many shun this holy exercise because they see the cross and not the unction. But you who have experienced it (he says to his religious) know right well that our cross is an anointed cross, and with this unction not only is it light and easy, but what appears to men in the world bitter and disagreeable becomes to us by the grace of God very sweet and pleasant to taste"—*Ecce vero scitis quia crux nostra inuncta est, sed, ut ita dicam, amaritudo nostra dulcissima*. So St. Augustine says that he had not understood this language of chastity; he thought there was no man in the world who observed it until he came to understand the power of grace, whereby we can well say what St. John said: *And his commandments are not heavy* (I John v. 3). The commandments of God and of the Gospel are not heavy and difficult, for the abundance of grace that the Lord gives to enable us to do what He commands makes them easy and

sweet. St. Gregory on that saying of Isaias: *They that hope in the Lord shall change their strength* (xl. 31), marks two sorts of strength—one of the just to suffer and mortify themselves much for God, the other of the wicked to suffer great labors for the world, for honor and wealth, and the gratification of their appetites and desires; and he says that those who trust in the grace of the Lord shall change this strength into that of the just.

The second thing that will render to us the practice of mortification sweet and easy is the love of God. There is nothing more efficacious, nothing that renders any labor more sweet and easy, than love. St. Augustine says: "He that loves labors not"—*Qui amat non laborat*. The labors of those who love are not burdens, but rather pleasures, as with sportsmen who fish, beat woods for game, and hunt. That labor is no burden to them; rather they take it for recreation, for the love and affection they have for it. What makes the mother not feel the continual labors she has in rearing her child but love? What makes the wife tend night and day her sick husband but love? What makes birds and beasts so solicitous for the rearing of their offspring, so as to be ready to fast that they may eat and labor that they may rest and defend them with so great courage, but love? What made the labors of seven, and then of fourteen, years in sun and frost seem light to Jacob for the winning of Rachel but love? *They seemed to him but a few days for the excess of his great love* (Gen. xxix. 20). On that saying of the spouse: *My beloved is a little bundle of myrrh to me* (Cant. i. 12); the glorious St. Bernard says: "She does not say, *my beloved is a bundle of myrrh*, but *a little bundle*, because all labor seems slight and light to her for the great love she bears her Beloved. Note also that she does not say absolutely, *my beloved is a little bundle of myrrh*, but with the addition, *to me*. To him who loves, the beloved becomes *a little bundle*. If He is to you a great and heavy bundle, it is because you love not, it is

for want of love; so take that for a sign whether you have great or little love for God. It is not that the labors of virtue are great, but that our love is small, and therefore they become to us great. Love much, and not only will you not feel labor, but relish it; where there is love, there is no labor, but relish only.

A holy woman used to say that from the time that she had been called and wounded by the love of God, she had never more known what it was to suffer either within or without, either from the world or from the devil or from the flesh or from anything else, because pure love knows not what manner of thing pain and torment is. Thus love, besides surpassing all works of high degree and adding great perfection to them, gives at the same time great courage and fortitude to face any labor and mortification and makes everything easy, light, and savory. So St. Chrysostom explains the saying of the Apostle: *Love is the fulfillment of the law* (Rom. xiii. 10), as meaning not only that all the law and all the commandments are contained in this short word *love*, but also that this love makes the observance of all the law and all the commandments of God very easy.

This is well confirmed by the saying of the Wise Man: *Love is strong as death* (Cant. viii. 6). Among other explanations of these words the saints give two that make for our purpose. St. Gregory gives one that St. Augustine takes to be the better. Do you know, he says, the meaning of that saying, that love is strong as death? It means that, as death separates the soul from the body, so the love of God separates the soul from corporal and sensible things; and as death separates man from all commerce with the things of the world, so the love of God, when it takes possession of our spirit, strengthens it so as to remove it from commerce and conversation with the world and from the affection that it bears to the flesh and to all sensible things. This is the meaning of love's being as strong as death; for

as death kills the body, so the love of God kills and deadens in us affection to all corporal and sensible things; it makes a man die to the world and to all self-love and live to Christ our Lord alone, so as to be able to say with St. Paul: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20).

Another excellent explanation is given by St. Augustine in these words: *Rest in his strength*. He says that the love of God is strong as death because death, when it comes, is irresistible; no medicine, no treatment avails against it; it boots not to be bishop, king, pope, or emperor; death lays all that low, nothing can stand before it, nothing of all the things there are on earth can turn it away, neither honors, nor riches, nor prosperity, nor adversity. Else let everyone see this for himself from the favor that the Lord has done him. With one little spark of His love that He gave you, nothing could stand in your way to make you quit the path of perfection and religious life which you took, neither parents, nor relations, nor all that there was in the world; but you spurned all that and made light of it in comparison with what you now enjoy. Let us, then, conceive a great love of God, and nothing will stand in our way, but rather we shall say with the Apostle: *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? Sure I am that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers; nor things present, nor things to come, nor strength, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God* (Rom. viii. 35).

CHAPTER XX

Of Another Motive That Will Facilitate and Make Agreeable the Practice of Mortification, Namely, the Hope of Reward

THE motive that will render this practice of mortification easy and sweet is the greatness of the reward that we hope for. With this hope holy Job animated and consoled himself in the midst of his very great afflictions, saying: *Who will grant me that the words which I would fain utter may be written*, to remain for a perpetual memorial to posterity! And for greater perpetuity he goes on to wish: *Who will grant that they may be imprinted in a book, or with a punch or burin of iron may be engraved on a plate of lead, or with a graving tool may be sculptured and holloed out on a flagstone!* But why dost thou wish, holy Job, for such perpetuity to thy words? That all men, born and to be born, may have in their afflictions the comfort that I have in mine. And what are those words? *I know by revelation of my God that my Redeemer liveth—he speaks of the Son of God and of the future as if it were past or present for the great certitude that he has of it—and since He is risen and living, I know that in the last day of the world I also am to rise again from the earth and dust into which I shall have been turned, and once more I am to be girt about with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God, Who is the reward of them that serve Him, whom I myself and mine eyes are to see and rejoice in, and none other—I, the same that now am suffering, am to rise again and rejoice in God—I keep this hope safe laid up in my breast* (Job xix. 25), and from thence as from a treasure I draw relief and rich comfort in my afflictions.

With this consideration God encouraged Abraham. For when he said: “Lord, I have left my country and my kindred, for so Thou commandedst me; what reward hast

Thou to give me?" God answered him: *I am thy recompense, and thy reward exceeding great* (Gen. xv. 1). With this consideration St. Paul says that Moses encouraged himself to abandon honor and choose a mean estate. *Moses, when he was grown up in faith and hope, reckoned nothing of being the son of the daughter of Pharaoh, who had adopted him for her child. All that he despised, and chose rather to be humbled and persecuted for love of God than all the riches and treasures of Egypt, for he had an eye to the recompense and reward that he hoped for* (Heb. xi. 24). With this consideration the Prophet David encouraged himself to fulfil the law and commandments of God, when he said: *I have inclined mine heart forever to keep thy commandments for the sake of the reward* (Psalm cxviii. 112).

St. Augustine says: "Heavy work it is to keep at it, continually mortifying and curbing our will; but look at the prize and reward to be given you for it and you will see that it is all very little in comparison: hope of reward lightens the stress of toil." So he says we see here in the labors of merchants, agriculturists, and soldiers. Now if the fury and force of the sea and its fearful waves do not dismay mariners and traders; nor rains and storms, field laborers; nor wounds and deaths, soldiers; nor blows and falls, wrestlers, when they set their eyes on the human hopes which they expect to realize by their labors, how shall one who looks for the kingdom of heaven quail before the labor and mortification that virtue requires? *And they indeed for a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable* (I Cor. ix. 25), says the Apostle St. Paul. If they for a perishable prize and reward, a thing of such short duration, expose themselves to such labors, what is it reasonable for us to do for a prize and reward so great, a prize that shall last for ever and ever! Why, what we do is nothing in comparison with what we hope to get for it; it is nothing that they ask of us in comparison with what they give—they give it away to us for nothing. You cannot tell

whether a thing is dear or cheap by the price they ask you for it, without looking at the same time at the thing that is sold. Else I ask you, are a hundred ducats much to give for a thing? According as the thing is, it may be such that it would be dear at fifty farthings, or such that it would be given away for nothing if sold at a thousand ducats. If it is a very rich, precious stone, or if they give you a city for a thousand ducats, it is given away for nothing. Thus, if you wish to see whether what God asks is much or little, look at your purchase, look at the recompense which they give you for it. *I am thy reward* (Gen. xv. 1). They reward you to the point of giving you God. Is that what they give me? Then they give it me gratis; they ask nothing for it in asking me to deny my own will and mortify myself; they give it me for a mere nothing. *Ye that have no money, make haste, buy and eat. Come, buy without money, and without exchange wine and milk* (Isaias lv. 1).

This means is also greatly recommended to us by St. Basil. "Ever remember the great glory and reward that you hope for, thereby to encourage yourself to labor and to virtue." The blessed St. Anthony Abbot thereby encouraged his disciples to persevere in the continued rigor of religious life. In admiration of the great liberality of God he would stop and say: "In this life the dealings and contracts of men are equal on both sides; one gives as much as he receives; what is sold is worth the price paid for it. But the promise of life and glory everlasting is bought at a very low price, since it is written: *The life of man is commonly some seventy years, or at most, with care and coddling, one attains to eighty, and what passes beyond that is pain, affliction and infirmity* (Psalm lxxxix. 10). But when we have lived eighty years, or a hundred or more, serving God, they will not give us for that the same number of years over again of glory; but for those years they will give us to reign forever in glory so long as God shall be God for all ages of ages (Exod. xv. 18). Wherefore, my

children (the saint goes on), be not affrighted, nor set before your eyes the hardship of this life, for all that we can suffer in this life is inconsiderable in view of the reward and recompense that we hope for (Rom. viii. 18)." For the labor of a moment they give us a weight of glory to last for ever and ever (II Cor. iv. 17). St. Bernard brings a very good comparison to bear on this point. There is no sower so silly as to think the sowing season long, though he spend many days in sowing; for he knows that the longer the sowing time lasts, the greater will be the crop. In the same manner, he says, the labor of this life should not appear to us great or very lengthy, for it is a sowing time, and the more we sow and labor, the more abundantly and plentifully shall we reap. And the saint adds: "Consider how from a little more seed sown there comes afterwards a great increase and multiplication." When the husbandman sees at harvest time how a handful of wheat sowed has brought in twenty or thirty fold, he will wish that he had sown a great deal more.

CHAPTER XXI

What Has Been Said in the Preceding Chapter Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IT is told of one of those ancient Fathers that he labored much, and did great penances and mortifications. His companions and disciples bade him desist, and moderate those afflictions and mortifications, being as they were so great. He replied: "Believe me, my sons, if the place and state of the blessed in heaven were capable of pain and grief, they would be very much distressed at not having suffered in this life greater afflictions and mortifications, seeing the great reward and recompense given for them and how they might have gained so much glory at so small a cost." This agrees with what St. Bonaventure says: "The

amount of glory that we miss every hour that we spend in idleness is exactly in proportion to the good works that we might have done in that time."

Something similar is related of the holy virgin Mechtildis. She was very frequently visited by Christ our Redeemer, her Spouse, to Whom she had dedicated herself entirely, knowing of Him many marvelous things. One day she heard the saints exclaiming: "Oh, how fortunate and blessed you are, you who still live on earth, for the amount of merit that you may gain! If a man only knew how much he might merit every day from the first moment of his rising, his heart would be filled at once with joy and satisfaction to think that that day had dawned on which he might live to God our Lord, and with His grace, to the honor and glory of the same God, might increase his merit; and this would give him courage and strength to do and suffer all things with the utmost cheerfulness."

In the "Spiritual Meadow," which was composed by John Eviratus, or according to others by St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and was approved in the Second Council of Nice, there is a story of a monk who had a cell at a great distance from water, about twelve miles; and one day that he went for water he fainted on the way from overfatigue. Seeing himself, then, so worn out, he said within himself: "Why need I take all this trouble? I have a mind to go and live near the water and fix my cell there." Another time, coming for water with his pitcher, he planned as he went along where his cell might conveniently be, and how he would build it, and the life that he would lead in it. Hereupon he heard on his track the voice of a man, saying, "One, two, three, etc." He turned his head, wondering how in that lonely place there should be anyone to measure and reason distance or anything else. He saw nobody, and once more went on with his journey, thinking over his plans. Once more he heard the same voice saying, "One, two, three." A second time he turned his head, and saw nobody

either. The same thing happened a third time and, turning his head, he saw a handsome smiling youth, who said to him: "Do not trouble yourself; I am an angel of God, and I come counting the steps that you take on this journey, for not one of them shall go unrewarded," and so saying, he disappeared. The monk, seeing that, reflected within himself and said: "How can I be so wanting in judgment as to choose the loss of such great good and such a gain?" He determined forthwith to change his cell, putting it even farther off from where he had it, so to have more labor and fatigue.

There is a story in the lives of the Fathers of an old monk who lived in the Thebaid, who had a disciple whom he had trained well. It was the old man's custom every night to give him an exhortation and after that to have prayers, and so he sent him to bed. It happened one day that some secular persons came to visit the monk, moved by the fame of his great abstinence; and after having dismissed them, it being already late, he set himself to give his exhortation as usual, and it was so long that sleep came over him and he dropped off, that holy old man. The disciple waited for him to awake that they might say prayers, and he get his dismissal. But as he did not awake, thoughts of impatience began to worry him, pressing him to be off to bed. He resisted once; then other and other thoughts assailed him till seven times, all of which he resisted manfully. It was now midnight, and the holy old man awoke; and finding him seated where he had left him when the discourse began, he said: "Son, why did you not wake me?" He answered that it was not to give him annoyance. They recited their matins; and when they had finished, he gave him his blessing and sent him off to sleep. The old man, putting himself in prayer, was rapt in spirit, and an angel showed him a very beautiful and glorious lodging, and shining in it a chair, and on the seat seven very rich crowns. The old man asked: "Whom are those crowns for?" The

angel answered: "For your disciple; and the lodging and seat the Lord has given him for the life he leads, and those crowns he merited last night." The morning came, and the monk asked the disciple how he passed the night while watching him asleep. And the good disciple related all that had passed, and how he had resisted seven times over the thoughts of giving up his watching. Hence the old man understood that it was by this that he had won those seven crowns.

It is told of the blessed St. Francis that one day in mid-winter his brother according to the flesh met him in rags and tatters, half-naked, perishing and trembling with cold, and later sent to ask him in mockery and scorn if he would sell him one drop of his sweat. The saint answered with a meek spirit: "Tell my brother that I have already sold it all to my God and Lord, and that at a high price." Another time, some years afterwards, when he was harassed with very severe and continual pains and, besides, with new and troublesome temptations of the devil, insomuch that it seemed as though no human strength could withstand them, he heard a voice from heaven bidding him rejoice and be glad, for that for those evils and tribulations he was to earn in heaven a treasure so great that, though the whole earth were turned into gold and all its stones into pearls, pearls most precious, and all its waters into balsam, that would bear no comparison with the reward and recompense that they would give him on that account. This message relieved and lightened the saint so much that he no longer felt his pains; and having on the spot called together his religious, he recounted to them with great joy the comfort that God had sent him from heaven.

CHAPTER XXII

Of Another Motive That Will Help Us, and Render the Practice of Mortification Easy, Which Is the Example of Christ Our Redeemer

THE fourth motive that will greatly encourage and help us in this practice of mortification is the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master. So the Apostle St. Paul puts it before our eyes to encourage us thereto. *Armed with patience, let us run to the conflict that awaits us, looking at Jesus Christ, Author and Fulfiller of faith, who, putting before His eyes the joy of our redemption, endured the Cross, and made no account of the shame and humiliation of the world. Think once and again of Him Who suffered so much contradiction of sinners against Himself, that ye be not worn out, your hearts failing you: for ye have not resisted and struggled against sin even to the shedding of blood* (Heb. xii. 1-4), as He shed His for you. Holy Scripture relates that, when the children of Israel were passing through the desert and came upon those waters of Mara that were so bitter that they could not drink them (Exod. xv. 23), Moses made prayer to God, and He showed him a kind of wood which, cast upon the waters, rendered them sweet and palatable. The saints say that by this wood is signified the wood of the Cross. When the labor of mortification becomes bitter and grievous to you, cast upon it this sacred wood; think of the Cross and Passion of Christ, His scourges and thorns, the gall and vinegar that they gave Him for His refreshment; and at once it will become sweet and palatable to you.

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis we read how a very rich man, reared in honor and comforts, entered the order; and as soon as the tempter saw his change of life, he assailed him with representations of the austerity of the order; how instead of the delicacies, good clothes, and

soft bed that he was used to, he found beans, a coarse tunic, straw for bedding, strict poverty instead of riches. He felt it much; and as the devil put before him the hardness of these things, he pressed him sore with instigations how he should leave them and return to the world. The temptation came to be so unbearable that the man determined to leave his order. In this resolve he passed through the chapter room, and falling on his knees before the figure of our crucified Lord he commended himself to His mercy. So being transported out of himself, he was caught up in spirit and there appeared to him our Lord and His glorious Mother, and they asked him why he was going. With great reverence he replied: "Lord, I was reared in the world in much comfort, and I cannot stand the austerity of this religious order, especially in food and dress." The Lord raised His right arm and showed him the wound in His side, running with blood, and said to him: "Stretch out your arm, and put your hand here, and bathe it in the blood of My side; and when there comes into your mind any rigor or austerity, moisten it with this blood, and everything, difficult though it be, will become easy and sweet." The novice did what the Lord told him, and for every temptation that occurred to him he called to mind the Passion of Christ, and at once everything was changed into great sweetness and delight. What hardship can appear hard to a vile man and wretched worm, seeing a God crowned with thorns and nailed to a Cross for his love! What will he not suffer and endure for his sins when he sees the Lord of Majesty suffering so much for the sins of others!

The saints made much use of this motive of the example of Christ our Redeemer and the desire to imitate Him because, besides being a very efficacious motive to animate us to mortification and suffering, it is likewise a motive of high perfection, making our actions many degrees more excellent, as springing from the love of God. And so we read of our blessed Father Ignatius that at the beginning of

his conversion he practised great mortifications and penances, having regard to his sins, and to make satisfaction for them; but afterwards, as he grew more advanced, he afflicted his body with austerities and chastisements, not so much in regard of his sins as of the example of Christ and His saints. The saints saw that Christ our Lord had gone that way and had embraced afflictions and the Cross with such love and desire, longing already to see the hour in which He was to give His lifeblood for us (Luke xii. 50). And as elephants put forth their strength in battle at the sight of blood, so they came hereby to have a great thirst of suffering martyrdom and shedding their blood for Him Who had first shed His for them. And as this desire met not with its accomplishment, they practised cruelties upon themselves and made themselves their own executioners, and martyred their bodies, afflicting them with penances and labors, and mortified and curbed their wills and appetites; and in this way they found some little relief was made as their desire was in some sort fulfilled of imitating as far as they could Christ our Redeemer. This is what the Apostle St. Paul says: "Let us go on ever mortifying and maltreating, *bearing ever stamped upon ourselves the mortification of Jesus Christ, that the life of Jesus Christ may be shown forth in our bodies* (II Cor. iv. 10). The treatment and mortification of our body should be such as to represent the life of Jesus Christ and resemble it. St. Bernard says: *Non decet sub capite spinoso membrum esse delicatum*—"It is not fitting, nor looks well, that, the head being full of thorns, the members should be dainty and comfortable, but be mortified and crucified in the flesh to be in conformity with their head."

Many are the other motives that we might bring for this, since all that the saints give and all the reasons they allege to exhort us to do penance may serve to animate us to this practice of mortification.

On those words of the Apostle: *The sufferings of this world are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18), the glorious St. Bernard says: "The sufferings and tribulations of this world do not equal, and are as nothing in comparison with, the glory that we hope for, with the punishment that we fear, with the sins that we have committed, or with the benefits that we have received of God." Any of these points, well considered, is enough to animate us to this practice.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of Three Degrees of Mortification

TO conclude and finish off this treatise, we will briefly set forth the three degrees of mortification which St. Bernard assigns. The first is that which the Apostle St. Peter teaches us in his first canonical epistle. *Brethren, I ask you to live as strangers and pilgrims on earth, and as such to refrain the desires and appetites of the flesh, which war against the spirit* (I Pet. ii. 11). We are all pilgrims in this world on our way to our heavenly country, as St. Paul says: *We have not here a lasting city, but we go seeking for one to come* (Heb. xiii. 14), *for while we are in the body we are away from the Lord* (II Cor. v. 6). Let us, then, make ourselves pilgrims and wayfarers. The wayfarer, says St. Bernard, goes straight ahead on his way, taking care to avoid all the circuitous routes that he can. If he sees on the route people laughing, or keeping festivals, weddings, and merry-makings, he pays no attention to it, nor cares about it, but goes straight on his way, because he is a wayfarer and those things do not concern him. All his anxiety and occupation is to sigh after his native place and take care to approach and arrive there. He is content with a light dress and with a meal enough to keep him going on his journey; he has no mind to go

laden with unnecessary baggage, but to go light that he travel better.

This is the way, then, we ought to try to behave on our pilgrimage. We should use the things of this world just by the way, in view of the end before us, like pilgrims and wayfarers as we are, not taking more than is necessary to enable us to go on our way. *Having food and wherewith to be clothed, with these let us be content*, as St. Paul says (I Tim. vi. 8). Let us eschew and rid ourselves of all that is not necessary, that thus we may travel the better for traveling light. Let us sigh after our country and be sensible of our exile. Happy and blessed is he, says St. Bernard, who behaves and conducts himself like a pilgrim upon earth, and knows and bewails his exile, saying with the prophet: *Hear, O Lord, my sighs, my tears and groans, for I am a stranger and pilgrim on earth, as were my fathers and forebears* (Psalm xxxviii. 13).

This degree is a very high one, and we shall do not a little if we get to that. But the saint tells us there is another, higher and of greater perfection. For the pilgrim, though he does not join in with the neighbors and townsfolk, sometimes is pleased to see and hear what passes on the road and to relate it to others; and with these trifles, although he does not altogether lose his way, nevertheless he is kept back and arrives later; and even he may be so amused and kept back by these things as not only to be made to reach his home later, but even never to reach it at all. But who is more of a stranger and more free and detached from the things of this world than the pilgrim? Do you know? He who is dead. For the pilgrim, though it be only to ask and seek what is necessary for his journey and go laden with it, may be occupied and kept back more than would be desirable; but the dead man, though he has to go unburied, feels it not. The dead man hears alike those who blame him and those who praise him, those who flatter him and those who complain of him; or rather he hears none of them, for

he is dead. This, then, is the second degree of mortification, higher and more perfect than the former, which St. Paul lays down when he says: *Ye are dead, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* (Col. iii. 3). We must not rest content with being as pilgrims in this life, but we must try to be as dead men. How is that to be? "Do you know how?" says a doctor. "Look at the condition of a dead man. The sign of one's being dead is his not seeing, nor answering, nor feeling, nor complaining, nor being proud, nor getting angry." But if you have eyes to see and judge of the doings of others and even perchance of the superior, you are not dead. If you have back-answers and excuses for what obedience bids you; if you show feeling when they tell you of your faults and rebuke you; sensitiveness and resentment, when they humble you and make no account of you, you are not dead, but very much alive to your passions, to your honor and reputation. For the dead man, although they trample on him, and run him down, and make no account of him, feels it not. Oh, how happy and blessed, says St. Bernard, is he who is in this manner dead, for this death is life, since it keeps us unspotted in the world and makes us entire strangers to it.

Great assuredly is this degree, and of high perfection; but possibly we shall be able to find something else higher and more perfect still. But where are we to go to look for it, and in whom shall we find it but in him who was rapt to the third heaven? For, says St. Bernard, if you give me another and a third degree higher and more perfect, you may well call it the third heaven. But can there be anything more than dying? Yes, there is something more than dying. Our Lord Jesus Christ *humbled and abased himself even unto death.* Is there anything more than that? Yes, St. Paul goes on to say, and the Church goes on to say it on the second night of Tenebrae: *Even unto the death of the cross* (Phil. ii. 8). To die crucified, that is more than simply to die; for the death of the cross

was a kind of death the most ignominious and shameful that there then was. This, then, is the third degree of mortification, higher and more perfect than the preceding. Thus rightly may we call it the third heaven to which also the Apostle St. Paul was caught up. *The world is crucified to me, and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). He does not merely say that he was dead to the world, but that he was crucified to the world and that the world was a cross to him and he to the world. That is to say, all that the world loves, the delights of the flesh, honors, riches, the vain praises of men—all that is a cross and a torment to me, and as such I abhor it; and what the world takes for a cross, for a torment and dishonor, to that I have my heart fastened and nailed; that it is that I love and embrace. This is being crucified to the world and the world to me, and the world being a cross to me and I to it.

This is a higher and more perfect degree than the first and second, says St. Bernard. The pilgrim, though he passes on and does not stop much over the things that he sees, yet after all does see them and stops some little time over them. The dead man (that is the second degree) takes prosperity and adversity equally, honors and ignominies, and makes no difference between them. But this third degree goes further and is not equally disposed to the one and the other; not only is it insensible, as the dead man is insensible, to honor and reputation, but it is a cross and torment to it to be regarded and esteemed, and it abhors such things accordingly. Not only is it insensible to marks of ignominy and contempt, but finds therein its glory and satisfaction. *Far be it from me to glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me and I to the world* (Gal. vi. 14). God grant that I may never glory in anything but in the Cross of Christ, for love of Whom all that the world loves is a cross to me; and all that the world takes for a cross is my glory and great contentment. *I am full*, he says, *of consolation*,

bathed in joy and gladness at suffering tribulations, persecutions, and affronts for Christ (II Cor. vii. 4). This, then, is the third degree of mortification, which with much reason St. Bernard calls the third heaven for its high perfection. And though he says it under the guise of this metaphor, yet it is the common doctrine of doctors and saints that in what we understand by the third heaven the perfection of mortification consists. This is the sign by which philosophers judge whether one has attained perfection in any virtue, when he does the acts thereof with relish and delight. And so, if you wish to know if you are making progress in mortification and if you have attained to perfection in it, see whether you are pleased when they cross your will and deny you what you ask; see whether you are pleased when they despise you and make little account of you, and pained when they honor and esteem and make much of you. Let everyone, then, enter within himself, St. Bernard says, and see and examine with attention which of these degrees he has reached; and let us not stop nor rest until we reach and are caught up to this third heaven. This is what the Lord said to St. Francis: "If thou desirest Me, take bitter things for sweet and sweet things for bitter."

Caesarius relates that in a monastery of the Cistercian Order there was a religious called Ralph, a great servant of God, who had many revelations. One night, staying in the church in prayer after matins, he saw Christ our Redeemer hanging on His Cross, and along with Him fifteen religious of his order, everyone also on his cross, in company with Christ our Redeemer. And though it was night, such was the brightness and splendor that shone forth from the presence of Christ that he could see very clearly and recognize them quite well that they were all alive. Five of them were lay brothers and ten choir monks. While he stood amazed at so admirable a vision, Christ our

Redeemer spoke to him from the Cross: "Ralph, dost thou recognize who these are that thou seest crucified around Me?" He answered: "Lord, I recognize quite well who they are, but I do not understand what the vision signifies and is meant to tell me." Then the Lord said to him: "These alone of all that order of thine are they who are crucified with Me, conforming their life to My Passion."

▣ TENTH TREATISE ▣

ON MODESTY AND SILENCE



CHAPTER I

How Necessary Modesty Is for the Edification and Profit of Our Neighbor

THE modesty of which we are now to treat consists in such a government of the body, such a guard over our senses, such a way of conversing and dealing with others, and all such movements and gestures on our part as may cause edification in all who see and have anything to do with us. In this St. Augustine includes all that he has to say about modesty. It is not my intention to descend to particulars of those points in which modesty must be observed, nor to note what would be an offense against modesty; sufficient for the present will be this general rule laid down by the glorious Augustine and common to all the saints and masters of spiritual life. This is his rule: "Take care that all your actions and movements be ordered in such sort that none may be offended, but all edified"—*In omnibus motibus vestris nihil fiat quod cuiusquam offendant aspectum, sed quod vestram deceat sanctitatem*. Let there ever shine out in your comportment humility along with religious gravity and maturity, and in this way you will preserve all becoming modesty. My only aim here is to show how necessary this modesty is, especially for those whose end and institute it is to attend to the salvation and perfection, not only of their own souls, but also of those of their neighbors.

On the first head, one of the things that do greatly edify and win over our neighbor is a religious and edifying comportment. Men do not see the interior, but only the exterior, and it is that which moves and edifies them, and preaches better than the noise and din of words. So it is told of the blessed St. Francis that he said one day to his

companion, "Let us go to preach," and so went out, took a turn in the city, and returned home. His companion said to him: "But, father, are we not preaching?" "We have already preached," he answered. That sedateness and modesty with which they went through the streets was a very good sermon; it moved people to devotion and to contempt of the world, to compunction for their sins, and to the raising of their hearts and desires to the things of the next world. This is a sermon in action, more effectual than one in word.

In the second place, this modesty and happy composure serves and helps greatly for our own spiritual advancement, as we shall say presently more at length. So great is the union and tie between body and spirit, between the outer and the inner man, that what there is in one is forthwith communicated to the other. Composure of spirit leads naturally to composure of body also; and, conversely, if the body is restless and wanting in composure, the spirit at once is discomposed and restless also. Hence it is that outward modesty and composure is a great argument and sign of inward recollection and of virtue and spiritual advancement to be found within, as the hand of a clock tells of the harmonious movement of the wheels.

Hereby we have a further illustration of the first head, for this is the reason why men are so much edified by modesty and external composure, inasmuch as they thereby understand and conceive the interior virtue that there is in the soul, and esteem and value it accordingly. St. Jerome says: "The face is a mirror that reflects the soul; and according as eyes are modest or loose and wanton, they reveal the inmost secrets of the heart." And it is the pronouncement of the Holy Ghost: *As clear water reflects the countenance of them that look into it, so the prudent man knows the hearts of men by the cast of their exterior* (Prov. xxvii. 19).

There is no mirror in which a man is so well seen as virtue and peace of mind are seen in the exterior. *By the movement of the eyelids a man is known for what he is*, says the Wise Man. *The look of the face revealeth him who is sensible and judicious: a man's dress, his way of covering himself, of laughing, of walking, discover at once what he is* (Ecclus. xix. 26) : And marking the signs of an apostate he says: *He talketh with his finger, winketh his eye, stampeth his foot* (Prov. vi. 12-13).

St. Gregory Nazianzen, speaking of Julian the Apostate, says: "A great many knew not the ways of Julian till he showed them by his actions and the sovereignty that came into him; but for my part, when I set eyes on him and conversed with him at Athens, I knew what sort he was. I never saw any mark of goodness in him. His stiff neck, shrugging shoulders, his eyes lightly rolling in every direction, his fierce look, his nostrils ever ready to sneer or scorn, his feet never still, his tongue practised in malice and buffoonery, his boisterous laugh, his readiness in allowing or denying the same thing with the same breath, his remarks without order or reason, his ill-timed questions, his unmeaning answers—but why run minutely through his qualities? Before his works, I knew him; and by them I have come since to know him better. Seeing in him such indications, I burst out into the exclamation: 'Oh, what a poisonous serpent the Roman Republic is rearing for herself!' This I then said, and at the same time heartily wished I might be mistaken; and without doubt it had been much better that I had been so, since then we should not have seen those evils which have set the whole world on fire."

As an ill-regulated and ill-kept exterior is a mark and sign, an evidence and token, of fault in the interior, so is modesty and due composure a sign of virtue within, and that is why it so much edifies and impresses men. For this reason we of the Society are particularly bound to secure

this virtue with great care. For, our end and institute being to move our neighbor to good by our ministries of preaching, hearing confessions, lecturing, teaching Christian doctrine, reconciling enemies, visiting prisons and hospitals, and so forth, this outward modesty and good comportment is one of the things that give greatest weight and efficacy to our ministries, that they may be received and work fruit in souls. Great authority with our neighbor is hereby gained from the idea of virtue and inward holiness which they conceive of us, and then they receive what is said to them as coming from heaven and take it to heart. Surius tells us that Innocent II, accompanied by the cardinals, came to visit the Monastery of Clairvaux. The monks, with St. Bernard, who resided there, all went out to meet him. This sight of the monks, the story goes on to say, moved the pope and the cardinals so much that they wept for joy, all marveling at the gravity of those in that holy convent, who, notwithstanding the solemnity of the day and that extraordinary occasion of receiving his holiness attended by the sacred college, kept their eyes fixed upon the ground, without once turning them anywhere; and while they were eyed by all, they looked at none.

This modesty and religious composure serves not only to impress and edify externs, but also those of the lower seculars are much edified to see a religious assisting at Mass, never moving his head all the while from side to side, or again walking in the street in great modesty, never raising his eyes to see even who has passed close by him, and are confounded and moved to compunction, and conceive in their hearts great esteem of such religious. So also here among ourselves he gives great edification who goes about in modesty, silence, and devotion. So also St. Jerome, among other fruits of this exterior modesty and composure, puts this: Do you know, he says, what one of those religious does by his silence and modesty? He is a strong and effectual rebuke to any chatter-box who goes about with little

heed of modesty and recollection; it is a rebuke to such a one to see that he is not like his brother. These are they who people religious houses; these are they who sustain and keep up virtue and sanctity, since their example attracts and moves all the rest to devotion, and awakens them to desires of heaven. This is what our Father says to us, asking us to proceed in this matter in such a way that by mutual consideration of one another all may grow in devotion and praise God our Lord.

It is told of St. Bernardine that such was his modesty and composure that his mere presence put all his companions on their good behavior. It was not necessary to say more than "Bernardine is coming," to make them all behave properly. And of Lucian the Martyr, Metaphrastes and Surius relate in his Life that the mere sight of him converted heathens and moved them to be Christians. These are good preachers, imitators of the glorious Baptist, of whom the holy Gospel says: *He was a bright and shining light* (John v. 35), that burned with such great love of God and gave much light and illumination to his neighbor by the example of his marvelous life. This should be a great motive to us to walk always with much modesty, so as to edify our neighbors and brethren and produce in them the fruit that we have said; for where is the zeal and desire of the greater glory and honor of God and of saving souls, so proper to our institute, if we do not try to do that whereby they are so much edified and won over, it being so easily in our power?

CHAPTER II

How Necessary Modesty Is for Our Own Advancement

IT is the common teaching of the saints that modesty and guard over the senses is one of the chief means that there are for our own advancement, being as it is a great

help to watchfulness over the heart and inward recollection and the preservation of devotion, since it is by the gates of the senses that all evil gains entry into the heart. St. Jerome on that text of Job: *Are the gates of death open to thee, and hast thou seen the entrances into darkness?* (Job xxxviii. 17), says that in an allegorical sense our senses are the gates of death because by them the death of sin enters into our soul, according to that saying of the Prophet Jeremy: *Death hath come in through our windows* (Jer. ix. 21). He says that they are called gates of darkness because they give entry to the darkness of sins. St. Gregory says the same, and it is the common manner of speaking among the saints, drawn from the axiom of philosophy: "Nothing can enter into the understanding without first passing through the senses as through gates"—*Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu*. Now when in a house the gates are locked and well guarded, all the rest is secure; but if they are wide open and unguarded, so that he comes in and goes out who will, the house will not be safe, or at least there will be no peace and quiet there with so much coming in and going out. So it is also here. They who keep the gates of their senses well guarded will live in peace and recollection; but they who take no care of this will have no peace or quiet of heart. Therefore the Wise Man admonishes us: *With all careful keeping guard thy heart, for out of it life proceeds* (Prov. iv. 23). *Keep thy heart*, he says; and he adds, *with all keeping*, with all care and diligence, to give us to understand the importance of this.

Now the heart is kept by guarding well the gates of the senses. St. Gregory says: "To preserve cleanness and purity of heart, it is necessary to make much account of the custody of the senses." And St. Dorotheus says: "Accustom yourself to keep your eyes modestly cast down, and not go looking about at useless and vain things, the usual effect of which is the loss of all the pains taken by a reli-

gious." All that you have gained at a heavy cost of time and labor will easily be lost to you through these gates of the senses unless you are careful to guard them, and you will find yourself empty and destitute. Oh, how well said that holy man (Å Kempis): "That is easily lost by negligence which has been gained with much trouble and difficulty by grace." And elsewhere St. Dorotheus says: "Beware of talking much, for it is a hindrance to the holy thoughts and desires and inspirations that come from heaven." And, conversely, St. Bernard says: "Continual silence, and removal from the noise of the things of the world and forgetfulness of them, lifts up the heart and makes us think of the things of heaven and set our heart upon them." And treating of modesty of the eyes, he says: "Eyes on the ground are a great aid to keeping the heart ever in heaven." And we know well by experience that when we go about with modest and downcast eyes, we walk in recollection and devotion.

This is the reason why those holy Fathers of the Desert, as Cassian relates, said that to acquire perfect purity and cleanness of heart and maintain devotion and recollection, it was necessary to be deaf, dumb, and blind. When the gates of the senses are thus closed, the soul will be clean, at liberty, and well disposed to speak and converse with God. But someone will say: How can we be deaf, dumb, and blind, when we have so much to say to our neighbor and are forced to see and hear many things which one had rather not? The way is to hear these things as if we heard them not, that they may come in by one ear and go out by the other, without letting the heart rest upon them, nor taking any account of them. St. Ephrem relates to this purpose how a monk asked another ancient Father: "What shall I do, since the abbot bids me go to the kitchen fire and help the baker, and there are there extern youths, who talk of many silly things that it is not good for me to listen to? What shall I do?" The old man answered: "Have you not

seen boys at school, how they are all together, making so much noise, everyone reading and learning the lessons that he has to repeat to the master, and everyone attending to his own lesson and taking no notice of the others, for he knows that it is of that that he has to give an account to the master, and not of the rest? Do you the same. Pay no attention to what others say and do, but do well your own duty, since it is of that that you are to give account to God."

It is told of the blessed St. Bernard that he kept his heart so continually fixed on God that seeing he saw not, and hearing he heard not, and seemed as though he made no use of his senses. He passed a year in the novitiate, and did not know what the roof of his cell was like, whether it was vaulted or a flat timber roof. There were three glass windows in the church, and he never got to see whether there was more than one. He had traveled nearly a whole day by the shore of a lake, and hearing his companions afterwards speak of the lake, he asked them where they had seen any lake; he had caught no sight of it. It is related of Abbot Balladius that he was twenty years in one cell without ever raising his eyes to the roof. In this way, though we walk in the midst of the world, dealing with our neighbor, we shall be deaf, dumb, and blind; and the noise of what we hear and see will be no obstacle to our advancement.

CHAPTER III

*Of the Mistake of Those Who Make Small Account of
These Exterior Things, Saying that Perfection
Does Not Consist in Them*

HENCE it is easily gathered how mistaken they are who make small account of these exterior things of modesty and silence, saying that perfection does not lie in that,

but in the interior of the heart and in true and solid virtues. Lipoman quotes a very good example to this purpose, drawn from the "Spiritual Meadow." He relates there that one of those ancient Fathers who dwelt in the Desert of Sythia went one day into Alexandria to sell the baskets that he had made, and saw there another monk, a very young man, who had just entered a public house. The old man felt this keenly, and resolved to wait for his coming out to give him his mind. When he did come out, he called him apart and said to him: "My brother, don't you see that you are still very young, and that many are the snares of our enemy? Do you not know the harm that a monk takes in going through cities by the figures and images that come in upon him through his eyes and ears? How dare you, then, go into public houses, where there is so much bad company of men and women and where you are forced to see evil things and hear what you would not? No, for the love of God, my son, do not so, but fly to the desert, where, by God's grace and help, you will be safe and secure." The youth answered: "All right, old man. Perfection lies not in that, but in purity of heart. I keep my heart pure, and that is what God wants." At this the old man lifted up his eyes to heaven, and cried: "Blessed and praised be Thou, O Lord! For fifty-five years I have been in the Desert of Sythia, keeping all the recollection I could, and I have not attained to purity of heart; but this frequenter of taverns and public houses has got it already." Let this, then, be your answer. I own to you that perfection essentially consists in purity of heart, in charity and the love of God, and not in these exterior things; but you will never attain to that perfection unless you make much account of the custody of your senses and the observance of exterior modesty.

St. Bonaventure notes this very well, and says that the reason of it is that the interior is acquired and preserved through the exterior, and these exterior things are the supports and defenses of the heart. We see that nature never

produces a tree without its leaves and bark, nor fruit without its rind or husk, but all things have their supports and defenses to preserve and adorn them. So also grace, which operates according to nature and more perfectly than nature, never produces the interior of virtue except through the exterior; that is the bark and husk whereby virtue is preserved, and interior recollection, and purity and cleanness of heart; and when that fails, the other fails too. As bodily health or sickness does not lie in the exterior, nor in having a good or bad color, but in the good or ill blending of the humors that there are there within, yet nevertheless when we see anyone with a bad color we at once say: "John is in a poor way; he is anything but well. Don't you see what a color he has got, what a jaundiced look, what eyes?" Now it is just the same with regard to spiritual health.

St. Basil illustrates this by a comparison, and as he makes it, so we may make it also. He presupposes that common doctrine and allegory of the saints, that the exterior senses are the windows by which the soul peeps out to see what is going on there outside. He says that there is the same difference between a recollected and a distracted soul that there is between a virtuous woman and a woman of light character. In the case of the virtuous woman, it is a wonder to see her at the window; but as for the light-headed and ill-living woman, she is all day at the window and at the door, seeing all who go by, calling out to one, talking and entertaining herself with another. This, says St. Basil, is the difference between the recollected and the distracted religious, that it is a wonder to see the recollected one peeping through the windows of her senses, hearing what is said, talking and losing time now with this party, now with that. The virtue or lewdness of a woman does not consist in her peeping at the window or not; but the woman often at the window, the woman loitering about the streets, she who loves to talk and converse now with one party, now with another, gives great indications and signs

of her levity; and that alone would be enough to make her wicked, even if she were not so before. In the same way it is true that perfection does not consist in custody of the tongue and senses; but the soul that haunts the windows and loiters about in the streets, the soul that loves to see, hear, and say things, will never gain perfection or purity of heart.

We should observe here another main point, that, as the exterior helps to compose and preserve the interior, so also the interior at once stamps composure on the exterior. "Where there is Christ, there is modesty"—*Ubi Christus est, modestia quoque est*, says St. Gregory Nazianzen. Where there is within a solid and stable virtue, at once there is gravity and seriousness in the eyes and in the tongue, much maturity of gait and in all our movements. Inward gravity and steadiness makes gravity and steadiness without. This is the modesty that our Father asks of us, a modesty springing from peace and true humility of soul; not a modesty put on and cunningly made up, for that will not last, but fails just when it is wanted—an artificial modesty in fact; *but a modesty naturally overflowing from the interior*, springing as effect from cause from a heart composed, mortified, and humble.

Hence we may gather one very good sign whereby to know whether a man is a spiritual man or not and whether he is progressing and growing in spirit or not. St. Augustine declares it by this comparison. We see that we who are now grown to manhood willingly go without many pleasures and amusements that we had as children—which it would have cost us much pain to have given up then, and now we do not feel the loss of them, for they are amusements and sports of children, whereas we are now men. In like manner, on the soul's journey, when we begin to taste God and the things of virtue, and one is becoming a spiritual man and a perfect man, one feels no pain in foregoing those sensible pleasures and satisfactions which one enjoyed

as a child and as one imperfect in virtue. Those are the delights and pastimes of children, and you are now a man. *When I was a child, I felt as a child, and thought as a child, and acted as a child, but now that I am a man I have given over the things of a child* (I Cor. xiii. 11). If, then, you wish to see whether you are a man, progressing and growing in perfection, or whether you are still a child, see whether you have given over and forgotten the things of a child; for if you still have a taste for the sports and amusements of children, a child you are. If you have a relish for pieces of childishness, for giving free vent to your senses, for feasting your eyes, going about and looking at curious and vain things, and your ears in hearing all that goes on, and your tongue in idle and useless talks and conversations, you are but a child and imperfect, since you have a taste for the pastimes and amusements of children and imperfect people. He who is a spiritual person and goes on growing and becoming a perfect man, has no taste for these things, but rather ridicules and scorns them, as a grown man scorns the sports and amusements of children, and would blush to take part in them.

CHAPTER IV

Of Silence, and the Great Blessings and Advantages There Are in It

ONE of the means that will greatly help our progress in virtue and attainment of perfection will be to refrain and mortify the tongue; and, contrariwise, one of the things that will most injure and impede our progress will be to be careless on this point. St. James tells us the one and the other in his canonical epistle. On the one hand he says: *If any man offend not in word, he is a perfect man* (iii. 2). And on the other: *If any man thinketh to be religious, and restraineth not his tongue, he deceiveth himself, and his*

religion is vain (i. 26). St. Jerome quotes this authority to recommend the keeping of silence, and says that those old Fathers of the Desert, resting on this sentence and doctrine of the Apostle St. James, took great care to keep it. He says that he found many of those holy Fathers who had passed seven years without speaking to anyone. Hence also Denis the Carthusian says that all religious orders have come to put among the chief observances of their order the observance of silence, and that with such severity that they enacted and ordained that he who broke it should be chastised with a public discipline.

But let us see what can be the reason why we have this matter recommended to us so much. Is it such a grave offense to speak one idle word? Is it more than losing a little time which is wasted in saying it, a bit of a venial sin that is cleared away by taking holy water? It must be more than losing a little time; the matter must be of more weight than it appears, seeing that Holy Scripture makes so much of it; for Holy Scripture is not given to exaggerations, nor weighs things otherwise than according to their just weight. The saints and doctors of the Church, to whom the Lord gives particular light to understand and declare the mysteries of the divine Scriptures, enlarge greatly upon the advantages that follow from the observance of the rule of silence and the great losses that ensue upon the contrary. St. Basil says that it is very profitable, especially for beginners, to practise silence; in the first place, in order to learn how to speak as is proper, for to speak well many circumstances are required, and it is a matter of difficulty, and of great difficulty. And since to learn other sciences and arts we reckon many years well employed to come out proficient therein, it will also be reasonable to employ some years in learning this science of knowing how to speak; for if you do not make yourself a pupil and pay attention to learning, you will never turn out a master.

But you will say: "By talking much we shall learn how to talk, as other sciences and arts are learned by much practice in them." To this I answer with St. Basil that this science of knowing how to speak well cannot be learned without keeping silence and much practice in keeping silence. The reason is that speaking well depends on so many circumstances; and we have such a bad habit of blurt-ing out, regardless of these circumstances, just what comes into our head and whatever it pleases us to think, and that in any tone we like to take, without order, without consistency. Two things, mainly necessary for anyone to know how to speak, are achieved by silence. The first thing is that by dint of much silence we forget the evil style of conversation that we brought with us at the outset from the world; which forgetting goes a long way to help us to learn a good style of conversation, as reciprocally the good style goes to make us forget the evil style that we had contracted. The second thing is that by this silence we find ample room and time to learn the right style of conversation. It gives us opportunity in abundance to look at those ancient religious, whom we understand to be experts in this science and who know how to speak properly, to learn of them and get impressed upon us that stamp of maturity which they show in their speech, and that repose and gravity of words. As an apprentice learns by looking to see how his master does things, that he may come to do the like, and so learning come out as a master, so we should look at men who are singularly excellent on this point, to learn of them. Look at that ancient brother here and that father there, what a good habit of speech he has, how graciously he dispatches and answers those who converse and deal with him. However occupied he be, he seems to have no other business on hand but to answer you; you will always find him in one mood, always like himself—not as you, who when you are much occupied give ungracious and snappish answers. Look at that other, when any order

comes to him on the part of obedience, how well he answers: "Just so, with all my heart," without excuses, without asking who gives the order, or whether there is anyone else who could do the job. Look at that other, how incapable he is of saying anything to wound anybody, or give offense to a brother, either at recreation or out of recreation, either as a sneer or for the fun of the thing, either in presence or absence of the person spoken of; how he speaks to all and of all with respect and esteem; and do you learn to speak in that manner. Notice this other, how, when they have spoken to him a little word that he might resent, does not answer tit for tat, but handsomely dissembles as though he had not heard it, according to the word of the prophet, *I became as one not hearing* (Psalm xxxvii. 15), because he has learned well how to conquer himself and his brother. Do you learn to behave in that manner on like occasions. For these two reasons St. Basil says that a long silence is very profitable; because by disuse it begets forgetfulness of old habits of evil speech and gives scope and room enough to learn how to speak properly.

On the text, *There is a time to be silent, and a time to speak* (Eccles. iii. 7), St. Ambrose and St. Jerome allege the practice of that ancient philosopher, Pythagoras. The first lesson he gave his disciples was to keep silence for five years, that during that long period of silence they might forget their evil manners, and listen to him speaking, and learn how they should in future speak, and so become masters in the art. Hence St. Jerome concludes: "Let us, then, learn first to be silent, that afterwards we may know how to speak. Let us keep silence for a time; let us study those who are eminent in this science to imitate them; let us become disciples, that afterwards, after much silence, we may turn out masters."

And though these saints are speaking to beginners, nevertheless what has been said touches us all. For either you are a senior or a novice, or you wish as regards the custody

of your tongue to be like a novice or like a senior; choose which you will. If you are a novice, or wish to be like a novice, the first lesson will have to be to keep silence until you know how to speak well, as has been said. If you are a senior, or wish to be like a senior, you must be the example and pattern on which the novice is to look, and from which the beginner is to learn. But I had rather you played the senior than the novice, since the senior is bound to more; it was for this that you were a novice and were silent so long, that you might learn to speak; and it is only to be expected that you should know how to speak after so long a time. But if you have never been a novice and have never learned to speak, it is necessary that you should be as a novice now; because so you will learn to speak what is proper, when it is proper, and as it is proper.

CHAPTER V

That Silence Is a Very Important Means to Be a Man of Prayer

SILENCE is not only helpful for learning to speak with men, but equally helpful and very necessary for learning how to speak and converse with God and be men of prayer. So says St. Jerome; and on this account he says it was that those Fathers made so much account of silence. "For this it was that those holy Fathers of the Desert, taught by the Holy Ghost, kept holy silence with extreme care, as being the source of holy contemplation." St. Diadochus, treating of silence, says that it is the mother of holy and lofty thoughts, and a great and excellent thing accordingly. If, then, you wish to be a spiritual man and a man of prayer, if you wish to deal and converse with God, keep silence. If you wish always to have good thoughts and hear the inspirations of God, keep silence and recollection. As some men are deaf through an impediment they have

in the organ of hearing, while others do not hear on account of the great noise, so also the noise and racket of the words and things and affairs of the world hinders men and makes them deaf to hearing the inspirations of God, and taking account of what befits us. God looks for solitude in order to deal with a soul. *I will lead her into solitude*, says the Prophet Osee, *and there I will speak to her heart*; there shall be consolations and heavenly favors; *there I will give her milk at my breasts* (Osee ii. 14), to signify the favors and bounties that God does to the soul when it recollects itself in this manner. St. Bernard says: "God is a spirit, not a body; and therefore He seeks a spiritual, not a bodily, solitude." And St. Gregory: "Little good comes of solitude of the body, if solitude of the heart is wanton." What the Lord looks for is that there in your heart you should make a resting place and a cell to converse with God, and for His Divine Majesty to delight to deal and converse with you. Then you may say with the prophet: *I have fled far away, and stayed in solitude* (Psalm liv. 8). To this end it is not necessary that you should turn hermit, or fly from dealing and conversing with your neighbor.

Further, if you wish to be always devout, well disposed, and ready to get on well with your meditation, keep silence. St. Diadochus says very well that as, when the door of the bathroom is opened many times, the heat quickly goes out that way; so when one talks much, all the heat of devotion goes out by the mouth; the heart is thereupon poured out and the soul left destitute of good thoughts. It is a sight to see how quickly all the sap of devotion disappears when the mouth is opened to talk without restraint; our heart is lost to us through the mouth. Moreover, if you wish to have much free time and to save and gain many long intervals for prayer, keep silence, and you will see that you have time in abundance to commune with God and with yourself. Oh, how well that holy man [A Kempis] said: "If

you would keep away from idle conversations and going about to no purpose, hearing news and stories of other people, you would find time ready to hand to think of good things." But if you are a lover of talking and pouring yourself out by the senses, do not be surprised that you are always short of time and never have enough for your ordinary exercises, as we read (Exod. v. 12) of the children of Israel that they were scattered through Egypt looking for straw, and so could not accomplish their ordinary tasks, and were chastised accordingly.

There is another main point to be observed, full of spiritual instruction; it is that, as silence leads up to contemplation, so also meditation and contemplation and converse with God lead to silence. Moses said to God: *Lord, since thou hast begun to speak and converse with me, I am become a stammerer and indistinct in speech* (Exod. iv. 10). And the Prophet Jeremy, in beginning to speak to God, says that he is turned into a child and knows not how to speak (Jerem. i. 6). St. Gregory observes here that spiritual men, who hold converse and commerce with God, become thereupon dumb for the things of this world, and talking and hearing talk of them offends them because they do not wish to speak or hear of anything else but of what they love and bear in their heart, and everything else cloyes and annoys them. And here we have experience of it. If you do not believe me, see how, when the Lord has blessed you at meditation and you come out from it with devotion, you have no mind to talk to anybody, nor to raise your eyes in one direction or another, nor to hear news; but you feel as though they had put a padlock on your mouth and on all your other senses. What is the reason of that? The reason is that you were occupied and taken up with God; therefore you had no mind to go seeking amusements and consolations from without. And, contrariwise, when one goes talking, pouring himself out here, and full of distractions, it is because there is no spirit, no devotion, no entertainment

there within. So says that holy man [Å Kempis]: "What is the reason why we so willingly talk and converse with others, seeing how seldom we come back to silence without some wound to our conscience?" The reason, he says, is "that by talking we seek comfort from another and relief for our heart wearied with various thoughts, and we enjoy thinking and talking of those things that we like or detest." We cannot live without some entertainment and satisfaction; and not finding it within, in our heart with God, we seek it in exterior things.

That is the reason why here in religion we make so much account of these and the like exterior faults, though of themselves they appear small. It is because these exterior faults, such as breaking silence and losing time and the like, are a sign of the little growth in holiness and the little interior virtue that there is within. One shows thereby that one has not entered into spiritual life nor begun to find satisfaction in God, since one does not know how to entertain oneself with God alone in one's cell. When there is no lock to a chest, we thereby understand that there is nothing valuable inside. When a nut is very light and bounces, it is a sign that it has no kernel. This is the main point that we regard in these things, and the reason why we make so much account of them.

CHAPTER VI

That Silence Is a Direct Means of Spiritual Advancement and the Attainment of Perfection

A VERY spiritual and learned father [Father Nadal] used to say of silence a thing very particular and noteworthy, well showing its importance; and though some may think it an overstatement and exaggeration, it is not so, but plain truth, well borne out by experience. He said that to reform a house or a whole religious order, nothing more

is needed than to reform it in point of silence. Let there be silence in a house, and I will warrant you its reformation. No greater thing, one would think, could be said in praise of silence, since this includes everything. The reason is that, when there is silence in a house, everyone minds his own business and the purpose that brought him to religion, which was to aim at his own spiritual advancement. But when silence is not, then there are complaints, grumbling parties, backbitings, and particular friendships, which are fomented by these conversations and familiarities. Then there is wasting of one's own time and making others waste theirs, and many other undesirable consequences following therefrom. Thus we see that, when there is no silence in a house, it does not look like a religious house, but a secular. Conversely, when there is silence, it forthwith has the air of a religious house and a paradise. As soon as you come in by the door, everything is redolent of holiness. This solitude and silence elevates the spirit and moves those who enter to devotion. *Truly the Lord dwelleth here, this is the house of God* (Gen. xxviii. 16-17). In the same way I say of any individual: reform him in point of silence, and I warrant him for a reformed man. By experience we see that, when we have talked much, we then find in our examen that we have fallen into many faults. *Where there is much talking, there is poverty* (Prov. xiv. 23), and misery, and matter of weeping. And when we have kept silence well, we hardly find anything to make our examen on. *He who guardeth his mouth, guardeth his soul* (Prov. xiii. 3). Even among the heathen, Chari-tans, a leading man and great doctor among the Lacedemonians, being asked why Lycurgus gave so few laws to the Lacedemonians, answered: "Because they who speak so little as they do have small need of laws." Thus silence is enough to reform any individual and to reform a house and a whole order. And this is the reason why those ancient saints so much esteemed and practised silence; and

why all orders have inscribed among their observances, for one of the chiefest of all, that of silence. Therefore Denis the Carthusian says that St. James says: *If any man sin not with his tongue, the same is a perfect man; and if any man thinketh to be religious, not bridling his tongue, that man's religion is vain* (iii. 2; i. 26).

Let each one, then, consider attentively how little we ask of him in order to his being perfect, and what an easy means we give him to that end. If you wish to advance much in virtue and gain perfection, keep silence, for thereby the Apostle St. James says that you will gain it. If you want to be a spiritual man and a man of prayer, keep silence, for in that way the saints say that you will ensure it. Contrariwise, if you take no care of keeping silence, you will never attain perfection; you will never be a man of prayer; you will never be very spiritual. If otherwise, tell me if you have ever seen any man who was a great talker and chatter-box to be very contemplative and spiritual; you will not even find him at all proficient. *Shall the talkative man be justified?* asks holy Job (xi. 2). No, says St. Gregory on that text; the talker shall not be justified, nor come to much good. And the prophet: *The talkative man and babbler shall not raise his head in the land* (Psalm cxxxix. 12). He shall not thrive; he shall not grow; he shall come under the malediction of the patriarch Jacob: *Thou art poured out like water, thou shalt not increase* (Gen. xliv. 4). If you have poured out your heart by these gates of the mouth and the senses, going beyond bounds to gather various distractions, you shall not grow, you shall not thrive.

The saints well liken the man who does not keep his mouth guarded and shut, to a vessel without a cover, which God commanded to be held for unclean: *vas quod non habuerit operculum, nec ligaturam desuper semper immundum erit* (Num. xix. 15), because it is ready to receive within itself any uncleanness, and speedily gets filled with dust

and nastiness; so does his soul quickly fill with imperfections and sins, whose mouth is not kept shut. So says the Holy Ghost through the Wise Man, and repeats it many times. *He who talketh much will do hurt to his soul* (Ecclus. xx. 88). *He who talketh much will go wrong on some point* (Eccles. v. 2). *There will not fail to be sin where there is much talking* (Prov. x. 19). Would to God we had not experience of this so often as we have! St. Gregory says well: "You will begin with a good word, and thence you will come to an idle word, and from that you will jump at once to a jesting word, thence at once to an ill-natured word; and little by little you will wax warm in your speech and grow in your desire to heighten facts and make them appear considerable; and when you think not, you will have slipped into lies, malicious perhaps, and even pernicious lies: you will begin with a little, and end with a good deal." Such is often the way, to begin with buffoonery and end in detraction. Albertus Magnus says: "Where there is no silence, one is easily overcome by the enemy." And he quotes Proverbs (xxv. 28): *As a city open and without circuit of walls, so is the man who cannot restrain himself in speech*. On which words St. Jerome says that, as the city open and without walls is much exposed to be entered and sacked by the enemy, so he who is not sheltered by this wall of silence is much exposed and in great danger of being overcome by the temptations of the devil.

And we may add another particular reason for this. A man in the world who is off his guard and taken up with many different things may easily make a mistake, but he who is on his guard, not so easily; so he who does not keep silence may readily be led astray by the devil, because he is distracted, taken up and absorbed in irrelevant matters; but he who walks in silence and recollection, walks always wide-awake and always on his guard, and so the devil will not so easily catch him or lead him to take a false step.

CHAPTER VII

That to Live in Modest Silence and Recollection Is Not a Sad but a Very Cheerful Life

HENCE follows a thing worthy of notice in this matter, that this manner of life, in recollection, going about with downcast eyes, without seeking to say or hear more than what is necessary, making oneself blind, deaf, and dumb for God, is not a sad and melancholy life but rather a very cheerful and joyous one—all the more so, inasmuch as the conversation and company of God, to which we are invited and raised by recollection, is sweeter than that of man. St. Jerome says: "Let others think as they please, since everyone speaks of the fair according as he gets on at it. What I have to say of myself is that the town is a prison to me, and the wilderness a paradise." And St. Bernard used to say: "Never am I less alone than when I am alone"—*Nunquam minus solus quam cum solus*. It was then that he was most in company, and most cheerful and joyful; because what satisfied and gave true contentment to his heart was communing and conversing with God. To persons who cannot carry on this inward converse, and have no idea of spiritual life nor of prayer, nor have ever found any taste for spiritual things, such a life will be sad and melancholy, but not to a good religious.

This will throw light on another hallucination. As the robber takes all the world to be thieves, so there are some who, seeing a brother devout and recollected, going about with downcast eyes and, unlike themselves, not picking up a conversation with everyone he meets, at once put him down as suffering from some temptation, or being a sad and melancholy character, and sometimes tell him as much. For fear of this imputation there are those who do not dare to practise that modesty and silence which they would fain practise and ought to practise. This is a point greatly to

be attended to, that no one should do harm in a community by his want of discretion and appreciation of the things of the spirit. Because you have no idea of finding any joy or satisfaction in silence and recollection, you fancy that neither has anyone else. Or perhaps that brother's modesty offends you because it is a continual reproach to your want of modesty and recollection, and you cannot abide it. Let that other man go forward in his own way, which brings him in more joy and contentment than you have in yours; because it is a spiritual and true joy, which is what St. Paul says: *Seeming sad, they are full of joy* (II Cor. vi. 10). Though it seems to you sadness, it is really great contentment and inward gladness. Even the heathen Seneca gave this admonition to his friend Lucilius: "True joy is not in the outward man, but here within the heart." As gold and fine metal is not what is found on the surface of the earth, but what is in the veins and bowels thereof, so true joy and satisfaction is not what one shows in his exterior, talking, laughing, and chatting with this party and that—for that neither fills nor satisfies the soul—but what is within, like fine gold, in the vitals and innermost recesses of the heart. In keeping a good conscience and a generous spirit, despising all things of the world and rising above them, in this does true joy and contentment lie.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Circumstances Necessary for Speaking Well

SET, O Lord, a guard to my mouth, and a gate of circumstance to my lips (Psalm cxi. 3), a gate wherewith my lips can be closed. The blessed saints and doctors of the Church, Ambrose and Gregory, speaking of the many evils and mischiefs that follow from the tongue—whereof Holy Scripture is full, and the Sapiential Books particularly—and strongly recommending to us the observance of silence

by way of escape from so many mischiefs and dangers, say: What, then, are we to do? Are we to be dumb? We do not mean to say that, say the saints, since the virtue of silence does not consist in not speaking. As the virtue of temperance does not consist in not eating, but in eating when necessary and what is necessary, and for the rest abstaining; so the virtue of silence does not consist in not speaking, but in knowing how to be silent at the proper time and knowing how to speak at the proper time. They quote to this effect that saying of Ecclesiastes: *There is a time to speak and a time to be silent* (iii. 7). Thus much discretion is needed to succeed in doing each of these things in its proper time; for as it is a fault to speak when it is not proper, so also is it to fail to speak when one ought to speak.

These two things, say the saints, the prophet gives us to understand in the words quoted: *Set, O Lord, a guard to my mouth*. What dost thou ask, holy prophet? A gate wherewith my lips may be closed. St. Gregory well observes that David does not ask for a wall in his mouth, and to have it closed with stone and mortar, so that it never should be opened, but a gate that is opened and closed at proper times, to give us to understand that we must be silent and shut our mouth at the right time, and open it at the right time, and that here in this discretion lies the value of silence. The same is what the Wise Man asks, saying: *Who will set a guard on my mouth, and a seal on my lips, that I may not come to fall by them and my own tongue condemn me!* (Ecclus. xxii. 3; xxviii. 28). So many circumstances and conditions are necessary to speak without mistake, that the Wise Man with reason fears to be lost through his tongue and asks for this discretion to know how to open and shut his mouth at proper times; for the failure of one circumstance is enough to cause a mistake; and for one's speech to hit the mark and be good, all the circumstances must concur without one failing. There is this difference between

good and evil, between virtue and vice, that a concurrence of all circumstances is necessary for virtue, without one being wanting, whereas for vice the failure of one is sufficient. *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex singularibus defectibus.*

St. Basil, St. Ambrose, St. Bernard, and others lay down in common the circumstances that are necessary to speak well. The first and chief is to look carefully first at what one has to say. Nature herself gives us clearly to understand the caution we should observe on this point. She has guarded and screened off the tongue not by one gate and lock only, but by two; first by the teeth and after that by the lips. She has put a wall and barbican to the tongue, whereas to the ears she has not put any locked enclosure, that thereby we might understand what difficulty and caution we should show in speaking, and what promptitude and readiness in hearing, according to that saying of the Apostle St. James: *Let every man be quick to hear, but slow to speak* (i. 19). The same lesson is taught by the anatomy of the tongue, since there are in it two veins, one of which goes to the heart and the other to the brain, where philosophers place the seat of the understanding, to give us to understand that what is to be said should proceed from the heart and be regulated by the reason. And this is the first advice that St. Augustine gives us how to speak well. "Every word," he says, "should go to the file (*ad limam*) before going to the tongue (*ad linguam*)."¹ It should be first registered in the heart, and filed down according to the rule of reason before coming out by the mouth. This is the difference which Ecclesiasticus puts between the wise man and the fool: *Fools keep their heart in their tongue* (xxi. 29), because they give themselves over without restraint to their tongue and its disorderly craving for talking, and say whatever comes into their mouth, the heart consenting at once as though heart and tongue were one. But the wise and prudent keep their tongue in

their heart because all that they have got to say comes forth from it according to the counsel of reason. They keep their tongue submissive and subject to their heart, and not their heart to their tongue, as fools do.

St. Cyprian says that, as a sober and temperate man takes nothing into his stomach without having first masticated it thoroughly, so a prudent and discreet man utters no word from his mouth without having first ruminated it right well in his heart, for from words not well weighed or thought over disputes commonly arise. St. Vincent says that we should make as much difficulty over opening our mouth to speak as over opening our purse to pay. How leisurely and how thoughtfully does a man open his purse! First he looks well to see if there is anything to pay at all, and to what amount. In this way and with this reluctance you should open your mouth to speak, looking first to see if you ought to speak at all, and then what you ought to say, and whether you are not saying more words than you ought, as in the former case a man looks to see that he does not pay more than he owes. This agrees with what St. Bonaventure says, that one should be as cautious and close over one's words as a miser over his money. St. Bernard is not content with this, but says: "Before speaking, let the word pass twice over the file ere it once passes the tongue." And St. Bonaventure says the same. St. Ephrem says: "Before you speak, communicate first with God what you have to say and the reason and cause for saying it, and then speak as one who is fulfilling the will of God, Who wishes you to say what you do say." This is the chief circumstance required for speaking well, and if we observe this we shall easily be able to observe the rest.

The second circumstance that we have to look to in speaking is the end and intention that moves us to speak. It is not enough that our words be good; the end also must be good. For some, as St. Bonaventure says, say pious things to appear spiritual men; others to show themselves off as

shrewd and well-spoken—the one of which courses is hypocrisy and pretense; the other, vanity and folly.

The third circumstance, says St. Basil, is that you must look who you are that speak, and to whom and before whom you are speaking. And he gives here good lessons how the young should behave before the old, and they who are not priests before priests, resting all on texts of Holy Scripture. *Be not talkative in a gathering of ancients* (Ecclus. vii. 15). It is a mark of good breeding and reverence to be silent in presence of elders and in presence of priests. St. Bernard says that youths honor their elders by silence—a good way of showing reverence and recognition—and by yielding them the precedence. And he adds a good reason. “Silence,” he says, “is a chief part of bashfulness, a quality that sits well upon youth.” St. Bonaventure, enlarging upon this, says that, as the fear of God composes and sets in order a man’s interior and makes him stand well with God, so bashfulness composes and sets in order his exterior and makes him observe modesty, courtesy, and silence in presence of his elders.

The fourth circumstance, says St. Ambrose, is to consider the time at which one is to speak, for one of the principal traits of prudence is to know how to say things in their right time. *The wise and prudent man will be silent and bide his time; but the foolish and indiscreet hath no eye for time and opportunities* (Ecclus. xx. 7). And of him who knows how to observe this circumstance of speaking at the right time, the Holy Ghost says: *Golden apples on settings of silver, such a thing it is to say the right thing at the right time* (Prov. xxv. 11). This looks well and gives great satisfaction. And, contrariwise, though the thing said be good, yet if it is not said at the right time, it is taken amiss. *From the mouth of the fool, says the Wise Man, the sententious word is not well received, because it is not said at the right time* (Ecclus. xx. 22). To this circumstance it belongs not to interrupt anyone, which is

bad manners and shows scant humility; nor is it a good time to speak when another is speaking. *While another is speaking, interrupt him not*, says the Wise Man. Wait till he finishes what he has to say; then shall you come in with your opinion. To this also is reduced what he adds elsewhere: *Answer not until you have heard to the end what they are saying to you: for that is showing oneself a fool and worthy of confusion* (Prov. xviii. 13). Such a one shows himself a man of slender balance of mind, and often brings confusion on himself by answering wide of the mark. He thought they were going to say something, and they were not going to say that, but something else; he has put his foot into it from being too sharp. St. Basil gives a further advice about answering: If another person be asked, be you silent. And when there are many together and they are told to speak their mind on a question, if they do not ask you in particular, it shows a lack of humility to seek to make yourself the spokesman and take the matter up in the name of all. Until they tell you in particular to speak, be silent.

The fifth circumstance which the saints lay down for speaking well, is *modus loquendi*, the manner and tone of voice, according to what we are told in our rule: "Let all speak in a subdued voice, as becomes religious." This is a chief circumstance, or, to speak more correctly, a large constituent part of silence. On those words that Martha said to her sister when Christ our Redeemer came to raise Lazarus: *Martha called Mary in silence, saying: The Master is come, and calleth for thee* (John xi. 28), St. Augustine asks how can she be said to say, *The Master calleth thee*, in silence? And he answers that speaking in a low voice is called silence. Here in religion, when the religious speak to one another in various offices in a low voice, we say that silence is then kept in the house. But when they talk in a loud voice, even though the things said be necessary, they are not keeping silence. Thus for there to be

silence in all the working-rooms, and the house to have the air of a religious house, and ourselves to look like religious, it is necessary to speak low. St. Bonaventure says it is a great fault in a religious to speak loud. It is enough that you speak in such a way that those about can hear you. And if you want to say anything to one who is at a distance, go there and say it, because it befits not religious modesty to cry out even to those who are far off. And St. Bonaventure observes that nighttime and the time of repose and recollection require even more particularly that talking be done in a very low voice, not to disturb others at that time. And the same requirement attaches to particular places, as the sacristy, entrance hall, and refectory.

St. Bonaventure says that to this circumstance of the manner of speaking there belongs also the habit of speaking with serenity of countenance, not making gestures with the mouth, notably compressing or expanding the lips, or showing signs with the eyes, or wrinkles in the forehead or on the nose, or shakings of the head, or much gesticulating with the hands—all this is commended to us by our Father in his Rules of Modesty. St. Ambrose and St. Bernard also say that it belongs to this circumstance that the voice be not affected, or quavering with womanish softness, but that it be the voice of a grave man. But while the manner of speech must not be affected or effeminate, they say that it must not be rough, hoarse, or wondrously grave either. The manner of speaking of a religious should always be grave, but with a gravity mingled with sweetness. And while a kind manner is always necessary in speaking, it is particularly necessary when we wish to give an admonition or a rebuke; for if that be not done kindly, all the good effect of it will be lost. St. Bonaventure says very well that, when one admonishes or corrects another with emotion and anger, he seems to do it rather out of impatience and desire to wound than out of charity and zeal to amend the offender. Virtue is not taught by vice,

nor patience by impatience, nor humility by pride. The example of your patience and meekness will give the culprit more edification than your reasons. So says St. Ambrose: "Warning and admonition must be without roughness and without offense"—*Monitio sine asperitate, hortatio sine offensione*. They quote to this purpose the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Scold not an elder, but entreat him as a father* (I Tim v. 1).

Here also is justly blamed an affected utterance put on on purpose to appear a highly discreet and well-spoken person. So those preachers are very reprehensible who aim at a highly-wrought and over-polished diction and make particular study of the same; whereby they lose the spirit and fruit of their sermons. They say that speech should be like water, leaving no taste if it is good.

Finally, the circumstances requisite for speaking well are so many that it will be a great wonder not to fail in some of them; and therefore a very good resource it is to betake ourselves to the port of silence, where by merely holding our tongue we ward off the many inconveniences and dangers that there are in speaking, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *He who guardeth his mouth and his tongue guardeth his soul from anguishes* (Prov. xxi. 23). And so said one of those ancient Fathers: "Only be silent, and you will find rest and quiet in any place." And even the heathen Seneca said: "There is nothing so profitable as keeping quiet, speaking as little as possible with others, and as much as may be with oneself"—*Minimum cum aliis loqui, secum plurimum*. Very celebrated is that saying of the holy Abbot Arsenius, which he used to repeat many times, and even sing it, as Surius in his History says: "I have often repented of having spoken, never of having kept silence"—*Me saepe paenituit dixisse, nunquam autem tacuisse*. The same is told of Socrates. And Seneca gives the reason of this: He who is silent can speak afterwards, but he who has spoken cannot get out of having spoken.

And another says: "A word once flying from the lip cannot be gathered back again"—*Semel emissum volat irrevocabile verbum* (Horace). And St. Jerome: "A word coming out of the mouth is like a stone flung from the hand—*Lapis emissus est sermo prolatus*; you cannot stop its going its way and doing mischief; wherefore you must needs look well at what you have to say before letting it pass your lips"—which is the first admonition that we gave.

Let us, then, make up our minds to set a good guard over our tongue, saying with the prophet: *I have resolved and determined to set a guard over my ways, that I sin not with my tongue* (Psalm xxxviii. 2). St. Ambrose on these words says: "There are ways that we should follow and ways that we should set a guard over; the ways of God we should follow and our own we should set a guard over," that we may not precipitate ourselves and go to perdition by falling into sin; and "we shall set a guard," he goes on to say, "by keeping silence." It is related in church history that a monk named Pambo, being an unlettered man, went to a learned monk to teach him; and hearing this verse, *I have determined to set a guard over my ways, that I sin not with my tongue*, he would not let his master proceed further to the second verse, but said to him: "If I can accomplish that, that lesson alone will be enough for me." Six months afterwards, his master met him and reproved him for not having come back again to take a lesson. He replied: "Really, father, I still have on hand to accomplish the first that I heard." Many years afterwards an intimate acquaintance asked him if he had by this time learned the verse. He answered: "It is forty-nine years since I first heard it, and I have hardly been able to put it into practice." But he had done so, although in his humility he doubted it; for Palladius relates of him that he took the lesson so well to heart and put it so well into practice that, before speaking or answering what he was asked, he always lifted up his heart to God and communed and conversed with Him, according

to the advice that we have mentioned. And the story goes on that hereby he drew so much assistance from God that when he was at the point of death, he said that he never remembered having spoken a word that he regretted having spoken.

Surius relates of a holy virgin [St. Mary of Oña] that one time she kept silence from the Feast of the Cross in September until Christmas, without uttering a word all that time; and that this was so pleasing to God that it was revealed to her that by that work of mortification of the tongue she had gained a free passage without passing through purgatory when she died.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Vice of Backbiting or Detraction

DO not backbite one another, brethren, says the Apostle St. James (iv. 11); do not tell stories of one another. *Detractors*, says St. Paul, *are abhorred of God* (Rom. i. 30); and the Wise Man says also they are *the abomination of men* (Prov. xxiv. 9). Men abominate talebearers and hold them in great aversion and abhorrence; and though outwardly they laugh and seem to enjoy their company, they at heart think ill of them and beware of them, because what they do to others in their presence, they know they will do to them in presence of others. This were enough to make us fly and abhor this vice, for what greater evil could there be than to be abhorred of God and men? But apart from that, I would wish for the present briefly to declare the gravity and malice of this vice and how easily a man may come to sin mortally on this point, that so we may use our best endeavors to remove ourselves far from so great a danger. Its gravity and malice consists in its blackening and destroying the fame and good name and reputation of your neighbor, which is more precious and

valuable than property and material wealth, according to those sayings of the Wise Man: *Better is a good name than great riches* (Prov. xxii. 1): *Have a care of a good name, for it is worth more and will be more lasting than a thousand precious and great treasures* (Ecclus. xli. 15). And so the doctors say that detraction is a greater and graver sin than theft, inasmuch as reputation and a good name is more precious and valuable than material goods. And coming to consider in particular when detraction amounts to a mortal sin and when it is only venial, they say what they usually say of all other sins which of their kind are mortal. As theft is of itself a mortal sin, but may be venial by reason of "parvity of matter," as when one steals an apple or a penny; so detraction of its kind is a mortal sin, but may be no more than venial when it is only a light matter that one brings up against another.

Nevertheless they observe here what has an important bearing on the case, giving us to understand the danger there is in it and the caution that it is necessary to observe over things that appear small. Oftentimes those things are not so small or light as people take them to be. Theologians say that to tell a venial sin of another, as that Jack told a lie, would not be a mortal sin if it were said of seculars, because with them it is a light thing and they do not lose their reputation for that; yet it may be a mortal sin to tell a venial sin or even an imperfection of a religious because that may do more dishonor to him, and injure his good name more, than telling a mortal sin of a secular. It is clear that, if I say of a religious that he is a liar, such a religious loses caste in your eyes more than there in the world a secular of loose life would lose by men's saying of him that he goes the whole of Lent without fasting or that he is a nightwalker. And it is necessary to observe that this matter of sinning mortally by detracting and speaking ill of another is not measured by what is said of him being a mortal sin or not, but by the esteem and reputation which

he loses. We should always proceed on this understanding and take it for a first principle in the matter. Most certainly it is no sin whatever for one to be of Jewish or Moorish lineage, and nevertheless all doctors instance it as a mortal sin to defame a man in either of these two particulars.

In the same manner if I say of a religious that he is imprudent, that he is wanting in common sense (this is the express example which doctors give), that religious loses thereby more of his good name and reputation than a secular would by having a mortal sin told of him; thus there is more danger in this matter than there appears. I take this man for a good religious, steady and sensible; you say, with a twirl of the hand, "Anthony is so-so," giving it to be understood that he is a man little to be trusted. So saying, you have undone him; he is fallen far from the high opinion that people had of him before. A visitor comes from another house; and if there be any matter of disedification there, that is the first thing that he tells, and begins to characterize one member of that community as haughty, another as obstinate and headstrong, a third as a restless intriguer. These things are no light things; they are apt greatly to tarnish the reputation of a religious. If anyone thinks otherwise, let him look at the matter as applied to himself. If another were to say these things of you and gave you such a character, see how you would feel it. Now this is the rule of charity which we should observe with our brethren.

We above all men, we who aim at perfection, ought to be very far from these doubts and fears: "Did I by what I said do notable injury to my brothers in respect of the esteem and good opinion which the others had of him? Did it amount to a mortal sin or not?" As we say in the matter of the vow of poverty: "Have I cause to put myself in doubt as to whether what I received or gave away without leave amounted to the quantity sufficient for a mortal sin?"

Very often we cannot determine for certain whether it amounted to that or not. Now it is harassing enough to put oneself in that danger; for all that the world can give, one should not put oneself in such doubt. We must proceed with great caution and care in little things, otherwise we shall very easily find ourselves full of scruples and uneasinesses of conscience and doubts about mortal sin. In this matter of talebearing it is even more necessary to be on our guard since we have great inclination thereto, and the light and easy pace at which the tongue goes is also very great. There is this difference between people who aim at perfection and those who do not, that those who aim at perfection make more account of small faults than the others of great ones. This is one of those tests which go a long way to show whether one is in earnest in his efforts after perfection or not.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he ever maintained an extreme silence about the faults of those in the house. If anyone did anything that was not so very edifying, he discovered it to no one but to him who had to remedy it; and then with so much circumspection and reserve and regard for the good name of the offender that, if to reform him it were requisite only for one person to know it, he never would tell two. Hence we should learn how to speak of our brethren. If our Father, being superior and having it in his power to tell and rebuke the faults of those in the house in presence of all in punishment of them, proceeded with so much caution, and that even in regard of faults small and inconsiderable, with how much more reason should we so proceed!

St. Bonaventure gives this rule for speaking of the absent: "You should speak of the absent as you would if he was present; and that which you would not dare to say to his face or within his hearing you should not say behind his back"—*Erubescant dicere de absente quod cum caritate non possent dicere coram ipso*. Let everyone know that his

shoulders are safe with you; and that rule embraces grave matters as also those that appear light, which are what often deceive us, since many times they are not so light as they appear at the moment, as has been said. And so we must not excuse ourselves on that ground, nor by saying that others think nothing of these things, nor by saying that they are public. So our Father taught us, he who never mentioned in his conversations other people's vices, even though they were public and were the talk of the town, and he wished us to act in the same way. In our mouth let all pass for good, virtuous, and honorable men; and let all the world understand that no man shall lose anything or be less looked up to for anything that we say.

When by chance you have come to know or have heard of any fault, observe what the Wise Man says: *Hast thou heard or known of any fault of thy neighbor? Let it die within thee, bury it there; let it end there and go not out: it will not burst thee* (Ecclus. xix. 10). The Holy Ghost alludes to those who have taken some venom or poison, and are in great anguish and nausea in their efforts to cast it out, and cannot without taking medicines and oils for that purpose, thinking that they shall burst if they do not cast it out. And the Wise Man there brings two other comparisons to declare the same. As the woman in labor is in great anguish and extremity of pain until she brings forth the child; or as, when they have lodged an arrow or barbed dart in the fleshy part of a bull, the bull never stops or rests until it gets it out, so the fool never stops or rests until he tells someone of the fault that he knows of his neighbor. Let us, then, not be of that number, but of the number of the discreet and wise, who have capacity and breadth of chest ample enough to shut up and bury these things and let them die and end there.

Our Father General Claude Aquaviva, in his "*Industriae ad Curandos Animi Morbos*," has a very pertinent chapter on detraction—it is Chapter XVII—and gives there a piece

of advice, that, when one has told a story to the disparagement of another, he should not retire to rest till he has first confessed it; for one thing, because it may possibly have amounted to a grievous sin, and easily may have, in which case it is not right for anyone to go to bed with that on his conscience, but we should always go to sleep as if we were going to die; and secondly, though the thing go not so far as that, yet this will serve for a remedy and preservative against your falling into the like fault again. And not only in this particular instance, but in all like cases which carry with them any doubts or stings of conscience, this advice will be profitable, and all the more as coming from our Father General.

CHAPTER X

That We Should Not Lend Our Ears to Detractions

THE blessed St. Bernard says: "Not only ought we to beware of saying what is objectionable, but also of giving ear to it, since a willing listener provokes the speaker, and also because it is a shameful and unseemly thing to give ear to matters evil and unseemly." The glorious St. Basil, speaking of the punishment to be meted out to the detractor and to him who listens to the detraction, says that both are to be isolated from the community. He gives them equal punishment, because if the one did not willingly listen, neither would the other find any attraction to tell the scandalous story.

Theologians on this matter of detraction raise the question whether in detraction hearer sins mortally as well as speaker. And they put some cases in which they answer in the affirmative, as when the hearer is the cause of the other's speaking ill of his neighbor, moving him thereto or asking questions about it; or when he welcomes the detraction because he is not on good terms with the party in question; or when he sees that the detraction is doing notable

damage to his neighbor and could break it off; because then charity obliges him to help his neighbor in this necessity. Thus, as not only he does evil who sets fire to a house, but he also who stands warming himself at the fire which the other has kindled, where he ought to come to the rescue with water to put it out; so not only he sins who acts the detractor, but he also who could and ought to stop the detraction and does not, nay, even perhaps by the look of interest that he shows gives occasion to the detractor to go on with the detraction. At other times they say that it will be only a venial sin not to resist, as one dares not say anything or meddle in the matter out of some feeling of shyness on account of the speakers' being persons of authority. Here they notice a thing which much concerns us religious. It is that, when he who hears the detraction is a person who has authority over them that are speaking, such a one is more strictly bound to resist and stand up for the honor of his neighbor; and the more so, the greater his authority. This is what the theologians say.

Hence we may gather how we ought to behave when we find ourselves in such conversations, and the danger there may be in dissembling and being silent and letting the matter pass, through our pusillanimity and want of mortification. And since for our sins so common is this habit of detraction in our day that people in the world can hardly carry on a conversation without discussing other people's lives, and we have so much dealing with them, scruples fail not to offer themselves in this matter. "Could I have stopped it and did not stop it? Was I in any way the occasion of that conversation's being carried on? Did I ask any question or show interest in hearing it, putting on a pleasant countenance at what was said or condescending to it?" And scruples apart—because here one may say that he knows very well how far to go, and when it is a sin and when not—let us always go on this principle, that we are speaking now to religious, and persons who aim at virtue and perfection, and want not merely to keep out of sin, mor-

tal and venial, but ever to do the better thing, the more edifying thing, the thing that will be of greater profit to our neighbor. This being supposed, if ever we find ourselves in a conversation where detraction is going on, and we are silent out of pure shyness, pusillanimity, and lack of mortification, and let the matter pass and consent to it, since silence gives consent, what impression are they to gather but to confirm themselves more in what they are doing, seeing that a learned religious and servant of God, a man of authority among them, lets the matter pass and says nothing? They will say: "This can't be a sin, since the father is silent." And if they thought it were a sin, and did it before your face, they would do dishonor to you and your order, daring to say in your presence what is evil and sinful, and you not daring to contradict, not having virtue and fortitude enough for that.

St. Augustine, to meet this pest of detraction, had written in his dining room these verses:

*Quisquis amat dictis absentum rodere vitam,
Hanc mensam vetitam noverit esse sibi.*

*Hence, hence be gone, detracting tongue,
That dost the absent's honor wrong!
This table only those admits
Who innocently use their wits.*

And it is told how once, when some bishops, friends of his, were dining with him and were beginning to let their tongues loose and speak ill of other people's lives, he rebuked them forthwith and said that if they did not cease their evil speech, he must either erase those verses or rise from the table. That is the saying of a man of courage: "Sir, I shall leave the company unless you stop talking scandal." St. Jerome says the same: "If you hear a detractor, fly from him as from a serpent and leave him." "But oh, how he will be hurt!" "Do it all the more on that account," says St. Jerome, "that the hurt may teach him

to hold his tongue about other people's lives." Leave him, then, with the word stuck in his mouth, that he may be ashamed of himself and learn how to speak becomingly another time. This is a good plan for us to adopt, either to bid them stop talking scandal or leave the company.

When this plan cannot be carried out, as seeming rude or incompatible with the high credit of the speakers, the saints give another plan, easier and gentler, which is to show a severe countenance at what is said, so as to give the speaker to understand: "That language does not seem to me right, and I don't like to hear it." This plan is given us by the Holy Spirit through the Wise Man. *The north wind scatters the rain clouds, and a severe look the detracting tongue* (Prov xxv. 23). And in another place: *Hedge thine ears with thorns, when thou hearest a detractor* (Ecclus. xxviii. 28). These are the thorns with which we are to hedge our ears—this unpleasant look, this frown and gloom which you show in your face when another takes to backbiting, are the thorns that prick the speaker and make him feel compunction and bethink himself that he is doing wrong in speaking of the lives of others. The Wise Man is not satisfied that you should stop your ears with cotton, or any other soft material, but with thorns, that not only the evil speech may not gain entrance there and you be pleased at hearing it, but that they may prick the heart and conscience of the detractor, and he may correct and amend himself: *By severity and gravity in the look of the face the soul of him that is sinning is corrected* (Eccles. vii. 4), and thereby he comes to understand and bethink himself that he is doing wrong. We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he made frequent use of this expedient. It happened sometimes, when Ours were in his company, that someone thoughtlessly let drop a word that did not seem to our Father much to the point or well said, and at once he drew himself up and put on an air that was somewhat severe, so that from the mere look of him the

fathers knew that there had been a fault, and the person whose thoughtlessness was to blame stood abashed and corrected. This he did often in things that seemed very slight and trivial, the fault of which, for being so small, escaped the sight of others and was overlooked by them; for he was not content with being always composed and master of himself, but wished his sons to be so too.

It is also a good expedient in this case to change the conversation and bring in other topics to cut the thread of what is being discussed. And to this end it is not necessary to wait for many opportunities or to come in quite *à propos*; rather it is most *à propos* to come in quite *mal à propos*, for so the speaker will understand, and the company, that they were not on a good subject, and that you did him honor in not rebuking him more clearly and putting him to shame before all; whereas if you hold back, waiting for favorable conjunctures and apt opportunities and the end of the conversation, neither would he understand the device nor you remedy the mischief. As when in a bullfight the bull makes for a man, they throw him a cloak that he may get entangled in that and leave the man; so, when one person is making for another and taking away his character, it is a very good expedient to throw him a cloak in the shape of another subject of conversation, that he may get involved in that and stop backbiting. And as to the man who threw the cloak the credit of having saved a life is gratefully given, so to him who changed the subject and stopped the backbiting credit is allowed and is due for the honor and good name that he has defended.

CHAPTER XI

That We Must Beware of All Manner of Lies

BEFORE all, let true speech go before thee, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxxvii. 20). Before all, always speak the truth and never tell a lie. One would think it were not necessary much to commend this to religious, since it carries its own commendation. Even in the world they reckon it a great vice to be given to lying, and to call one a liar is a great insult; what should it be here in religion, where far more esteem and good opinion is lost by such a vice than there in the world? It is easy to see what a base and foul thing it is, and how unworthy of a religious. And much further should he be from lying to excuse himself and cover his fault. Far indeed is he from mortification and humility who tells a lie that his fault may not be known nor his reputation diminished. We should go out of our way to seek occasions of humiliation and mortification; and do you fly from those that come in your way of themselves, occasions that you cannot avoid without sin? That would be a great renunciation of the perfection which we profess. For the salvation of the whole world, so theologians and saints say, it would not be lawful to tell one lie; see if it would be lawful to tell one to escape the shame of failure in some trifling matter. Of seven things that God abhors, according to the Wise Man, the second is *a lying tongue* (Prov. vi. 17).

Another way of telling a lie, though not in such set terms, is when we tell a story "with advantages," putting in more than was true. Truth is one and indivisible; so anything that is added to it beyond the facts or beyond the knowledge of the speaker will be a lie. And of this there is commonly much danger, because we like it to appear that there is something in what we say and so seek to make the most of the story. Here we should proceed with much cau-

tion. St. Bonaventure says further that we should avoid amplifications and exaggerations, since it is not in accordance with religious gravity and modesty to exaggerate things. It should be your veracity and gravity that gives authority to what you say, not superfluous words and exaggerations; for these, so far from giving authority to what you say, make you lose the authority you had. The reason why the use of highly figurative and exaggerated language is a loss to the credit and authority of the speaker is that in such frequent exaggerations there comes to be a lie in the statement. It was not such a big thing as that. So men prone to exaggeration are not generally held to be very truthful, and lose credit and authority. It is told of our blessed Father Ignatius that he hardly ever employed what are called in Latin superlative nouns, because in them there is a lurking danger of sometimes overstating things beyond the fact, but said and told things simply and plainly without amplification or exaggeration. And so far was he from overstatements and exaggerations that it is said of him that even the things that he did know he did not strongly affirm. This is a common lesson given us on this subject by the saints. The glorious Bernard says: "Never affirm or deny with unmeasured asseveration and certitude that you know, but speak always with a little salt and grace of some doubt, saying for instance, 'I think it is so,' or 'If I am not mistaken, it is so,' 'I fancy I have heard it said.'" If this can be done discreetly, it is a modest mode of speech, humble and religious, and showing a man not too self-reliant, nor self-opinionated—a thing impossible to a humble man. The saints spoke in this way, since they were very humble and distrustful of self. Surius relates of St. Dominic Loricatus that, if anyone asked him what o'clock it was, he never answered flatly "eight" or "nine," but "about eight," or "about nine." And being asked why he answered in that way, he answered: "Because in that way I am sure of not telling a lie; now it may have struck the

hour, now it may be still to strike." This is another reason why it is part of religious prudence and modesty not to affirm things strongly "without a little salt and savor of some doubt," as St. Bernard says, because in that way you escape the danger of telling a lie, even though the thing should turn out to be otherwise than as you say. But when people make affirmations absolutely with much decision and asseveration, and afterwards it turns out not to be so, as does sometimes happen, they are annoyed with themselves afterwards for having told a lie and so strongly affirmed it for certain. And besides it disedifies the hearer when he finds that things are not so. I say this about things that we take for certain, because if I affirm a thing absolutely when I am in doubt about it, it is a lie still, even though it turns out to be true, because I speak beyond my knowledge; or at least I put myself in manifest danger of what I say being a lie, which comes to the same thing.

St. Bonaventure says further, you must not only always speak the truth, but speak it plainly and simply, without double-meaning and without equivocal words that may bear more than one sense, because that is a thing very foreign to religious straightforwardness and simplicity; and St. Augustine adds that such manner of speaking is lying. There are people who do not want to lie and do not want to speak the truth either, but use circumlocutions and equivocations that you may understand one thing while they understand another. In a grave case it is lawful to use equivocal speech, to conceal something which it is proper to conceal; but in ordinary conversation it is not lawful, but is a vicious habit of men who are double-dealers and insincere; and so it is clean contrary to the purity and simplicity, not only of religious, but even of Christian and social life, because it stands in the way of fidelity in the dealings and intercourse of men one with another—neither more nor less than downright lying, for it is certain that if such language were ordinarily lawful men would not dare to trust

one another. And so experience teaches us that, when we know of any persons that they are addicted to this vice, though in other respects they be virtuous men, their acquaintance do not dare to trust them, but treat them with reserve and fear of being deceived. So says the Wise Man: *He who speaketh sophistically, is a hateful person* (Ecclus. xxxvii. 23). Then let not that be said of you which we hear said of some people: "John is far from telling a lie and equally far from speaking the truth."

CHAPTER XII

That We Should Beware of Jocose and Ridiculous Expressions, and Saying Smart and Witty Things

THE blessed St. Basil says: "Beware of jocose and ridiculous expressions, of words of buffoonery, of going about frisking and playing the fool, because these are the amusements of children, and he who is aiming at perfection ought in conscience to give up being a child and play the man." The saint goes on to say that these fooleries and amusements make one remiss and negligent in the things of the service of God and banish devotion and compunction of heart. Especially, he says, one should beware of saying witty and facetious things, because that means turning oneself into a merry-andrew and a mountebank—a thing most unworthy of anyone aiming at perfection. St. Bernard treats this point very seriously: "Among seculars, nonsense is nonsense; in the mouth of a priest"—and of a religious—"it is blasphemy. You have consecrated your mouth to the Gospel. To open it to such nonsensical things is unlawful; to accustom it to them a sacrilege—as it would be to turn to profane uses a temple consecrated to God"—*Inter saeculares nugae sunt, in ore sacerdotis blasphemiae. The lips of a priest shall keep wisdom, and they shall seek the law from his mouth* (Mal. ii. 7), certainly

not nonsense, idle stories and buffooneries. Not content with a religious' being far from uttering such words, St. Bernard would have him also be far from listening to them and taking pleasure in them. *Verbum scurrille, quod faceti urbanive nomine colorant, non sufficit peregrinari ab ore; procul et ab aure relegandum est.* Scurrility, though some people call it facetiousness or wit, is to be banished from our hearing. When others say such things in our presence, he would have us behave as when we hear detraction, making it a point to interrupt the speaker and change the conversation with some profitable remark, and showing a severe countenance. If we should blush to hear such things and to have them said in our presence, what must it be to say them ourselves? "It is an unseemly thing," he says, "to burst out laughing, still more unseemly to move others to loud laughter" over such things. *Foede ad cachinnos moveris, foedius moves.* Clement of Alexandria, who was Origen's master, says, with St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure: "Since all words proceed from the thought and character of the speaker, it is impossible for ridiculous speeches to be uttered without their proceeding from an equally ridiculous character." *From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Matt. xii. 34). Thus he who utters vain and frivolous words shows the vanity and frivolity of his heart. As from the sound you can tell whether a bell or vessel is sound or cracked, full or empty; so from the voice and tone of the words it is easy to see at once that the interior is full or empty, sound or cracked. He who says these things in conversation sounds empty. On the text: *Let no evil speech come forth from your mouth* (Eph. v. 4), St. Chrysostom observes: "As each one's heart is, so are the words that he utters and the deeds that he does."

The holy martyr Ignatius in the midst of his torments kept repeating time after time the name of Jesus and, being asked the reason, replied: "Because I have it written in my heart and therefore cannot help often repeating it." And

when he was dead, they took out his heart and divided it and they found in every part the name of Jesus written in letters of gold. He who says witty and facetious things has not the name of Jesus written on his heart, but the world and its vanity, and that is what springs from his mouth. Thus we see that men who pride themselves on saying witty things and making others laugh with their facetious sayings are not only not spiritual men, but are not good religious.

Father Master Avila interpreted to this effect the saying of the Apostle: *Scurrility, that is not to the point* (Eph. v. 4). Witty speeches and buffooneries, he said, are not only not in keeping with religious modesty, but not even with the gravity and practice of Christian life. And we read in his life that no witticism was ever found in his mouth. And of St. John Chrysostom, Metaphrastes relates that he never said funny things, nor consented to others' saying them. The ancient Fathers made such a point of this, that the penance which St. Basil enjoined on anyone who spoke such words was separation from the community for a week. That was a sort of excommunication that the monks practised, separating such people from conversation and intercourse with the rest of the religious, that they might not infect them nor give them the itch, and that they might be ashamed of themselves and understand that he does not deserve to be among the rest of the religious who does not converse and talk like a religious.

In the Life of St. Hugh, Abbot of Cluny, Surius tells of an archbishop of Toulouse, named Duranus, who was fond of hearing and saying witty things and idle words. St. Hugh rebuked him sundry times, as he had been once a monk of his monastery, telling him that if he did not amend he would have special purgatory on that account. The archbishop died a few days afterwards, and appeared to a monk named Siguin, and showed his face much swollen and his lips full of sores, and begged him with tears to ask

Hugh's prayers for him, for that he suffered cruel torment in purgatory for his witticisms and idle words, of which he had not corrected himself. Siguin related this to the holy Abbot Hugh, who commanded seven monks to keep silence for seven days in satisfaction for this fault. Of these, one broke silence. The archbishop appeared to Siguin and complained that his cure was delayed for that monk's disobedience. Siguin carried this to Hugh, who found that it was true and enjoined another monk to keep silence for seven days, at the end of which the archbishop appeared for the third time and thanked the abbot and his monks. He showed himself in his pontifical robes, with his face healthy and very cheerful, and thereupon disappeared.

Especially it should be observed here that we ought to beware of stinging pleasantries—little words uttered sometimes in fun, and taken for wit, but apt to wound another, because covertly they reflect on his birth or on his understanding and somewhat dull wit or other defect. These pleasantries are more grievous and evil than those mentioned above, inasmuch as they are often offensive to persons, and that all the more, the funnier they are, since they make a more lasting impression on the hearers and stick in their memory more. Even there in the world, where funny men, whom they call wags, know how to do this without personal offense or hurting anyone's feelings, they go down and are reckoned good company among men in the world, and they say of them: "He is a wag, but after all his droll sayings do not hurt anyone." But when they sting with their sarcasm, they are greatly disliked, and generally even come to an ill end, because there does not fail to be someone to give them their due. But of this and other manners of speech contrary to fraternal charity, we have spoken in the Fourth Treatise.

CHAPTER XIII

*That Our Talk and Conversations Ought to Be of God,
and of Some Means to Make Them So*

LET no evil word come from your mouth, says the Apostle (Eph. iv. 29), *but let all your conversation be ever of good things, things of edification and profit for the hearers*, apt to kindle and set them on fire with the love of God and the desire of virtue and perfection. This is a thing very necessary for us, since it is our end and institute not only to attend to our own spiritual progress, but also to that of our neighbor; and talk and conversations of this sort are one of the things that greatly edify those with whom we deal and does them much good. Besides the profit that these conversations carry with them, there is this, that people of the world, seeing that our conversation is always on these subjects, conceive a high idea and great respect for us, understanding him to be full of God who never converses with them except of God, and thus our ministrations in their regard are apt to be of great effect. Of Father Francis Xavier it is read in his Life that he did more good by his private conversations than by his sermons. And our Father in his Constitutions, treating of the means which they of the Society have to aid their neighbor, sets down this for one of the chief, and lays it down for a general rule that they of the Society are to be careful to make use of it, even the lay brothers.

That we may know how and be able to do this better, it will help us much, in the first place, to be accustomed here amongst ourselves to speak of good and spiritual things. We read of the blessed St. Francis that he made his religious often sit down by themselves to talk of the things of God, that they might be trained to this language and style of conversation when they should be in the company of seculars. And it is related there that once, when they were

engaged in this holy conversation, the Lord appeared in the midst of them in the shape of a most beautiful youth and gave them His blessing, letting them understand how these conversations pleased Him. And in the Society there is this practice in the novitiate of often bringing the novices together to talk to one another of spiritual things; and all our life afterwards we are wont to have frequent spiritual conferences amongst ourselves in order to gain dexterity in this language; and besides it is much commended to us in our ordinary conversations.

St. Bernard in this matter gives a very good and grave reprehension to certain religious of his time, putting before them what was the custom in the golden age. "Oh, how far off we are," he says, "from those monks that were in the time of St. Anthony and of St. Paul, the first hermit! When they met together and visited one another, all their conversation was of heaven, and they took with such avidity and hunger this food of the soul, speaking and treating of God and of the profit of their souls, that they forgot their bodily food and often went whole days fasting in this occupation. And that was a good order, since they served first the more leading and worthier part of themselves, which is the soul. But nowadays when we meet, there is none who asks for or distributes this spiritual and heavenly food, none who is wont in visits and conversations to speak of the Holy Scriptures or of what concerns the salvation of souls, but it is all laughing, joking, and words that the wind carries away. And the worst of it is," says the saint, "the knowing how to entertain one another in this way is called affability and discretion, and the contrary is called dryness, rudeness, and rusticity; and those who speak of God are held up for melancholy persons, and their company is shunned. This charity is the ruin of true charity, and this discretion the ruin of true discretion. For what charity is it to love the flesh and despise the spirit? And what discretion is it to give all to the body and nothing to the soul?

To feed the body full and starve the soul is not discretion nor charity, but cruelty and a great breach of due order." Tauler, a grave doctor, relates that the Lord once appeared to a great servant of His and told him with great emotion of six complaints that He had against His servants; whereof the second was that in their meetings and conversations they spoke of vain and pointless things, while as for Himself, none took His name in his mouth. Let us, then, take care that the Lord may not bring this complaint against us and may not be able to give us this reprehension.

St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure give another good means for always speaking of edifying things. It is that, when we go out to converse with our neighbor, we should have ready certain good and profitable things to say to them; and when they speak of idle and vain things, we should promptly put in things of edification to cut short and change the conversation, of which point our rules admonish us. And it is not much to ask that we who are religious should take this means to keep up talk and conversation about God, so proper to our vocation, since we see that people in the world do the same to keep up their worldly talk and conversation. In this we should show good understanding and discretion, and dexterity in setting bounds to and cutting short conversations not to the point, and bringing in the things of God.

A third thing that will help us much herein is a great love of God and great affection for spiritual things; because in this way we shall feel no weariness or disgust in speaking of God or hearing Him spoken of, but rather we shall take much delight therein; since it is no burden, but on the contrary a pleasure and delight for anyone to speak of that which he loves and has at heart. Else see with what hearty good will the tradesman speaks of his bargains and business. In season and out of season, at all times, he is glad to hear of a good opening for buying and selling. The farmer speaks readily enough of his tillage and crops, the shepherd of his calves and lambs. *He who guideth the*

plough and glorieth in wielding the goad, will diligently urge on his oxen, and his whole occupation is his work in the fields, and his talk is of breeds of bulls (Ecclus. xxxviii. 26). Every man willingly talks of what is to him matter of business. So also with us, who have left the world and are aiming at perfection, if we have a great love of God and affection for spiritual things, all our joy and recreation will be to speak of those things and we shall not want matter of conversation. Thus it is a very good sign when one has a taste for speaking and talking about God, and a bad sign when one has it not, according to what St. John says: *They are of the world, and therefore they talk of the things of the world* (I John iv. 5).

St. Augustine, on those words of the Wise Man: *Thou hast fed them with the food of angels, and hast given them bread from heaven, prepared with no labor of theirs, having in itself all that is delicious and the sweetness of all tastes* (Wisdom xvi. 20), says that this manna from heaven, with which God nourished the children of Israel in the desert, had to each one the taste that he wished, according to the above words; but that, he goes on to say, must be understood only of the good, for to the wicked it had not the taste that they wished, otherwise they would not have asked and longed for other food, as they did ask and long for it. To these, not only did the manna not have the taste of all things desirable, but they came in time to be disgusted with it and cloyed with it, and they sighed after the flesh meat and remembered the fleshpots of Egypt, the cucumbers and melons and leeks and onions and garlic that they ate there; that they desired and longed for in preference. But the good were quite satisfied with the manna, and had no desire of other food nor memory of it, because in the manna they found all the tastes that they wished. Now this is the difference between good and perfect religious and the tepid and imperfect, that good religious have a great taste for spiritual things and the things of God

and of speaking and talking of them, and they find in that manna all good tastes. God has for them the taste of all they desire, and they say with St. Augustine and St. Francis, *My God and my all*. God is all things to them, and they find in Him all that they desire. But to the tepid and imperfect this divine manna has not the taste of all things; but it disgusts them, and they reject it and rejoice rather in hearing of a story than of a matter of edification, which is not a good sign.

"Happy the tongue," says St. Jerome, "that can speak only of God." And St. Basil says: "To the true servant of God all vain and useless conversations are an annoyance; and conversations and talks about God are sweeter and more delicious than honey." Hence it is that a soul that is much drawn to God, when she feels the want of virtuous recreation and some means of forgetting her labors and infirmities, has no need to distract herself with talks and conversations about idle and ridiculous things, for as she loves not those things, so they go rather to increase her pain and affliction. What consoles her and gives her relief is talking and hearing others talk of what she loves and desires. So we read of St. Catharine of Siena that she was never tired of speaking about God; rather it was her recreation and the means to increase her health and vigor and make her forget her infirmities and labors. And we read the same of many other saints.

CHAPTER XIV

*Of Another Chief Reason Making It Highly Befitting
that Our Talks and Conversations with Our
Neighbors Should Be about God*

NOT only for the edification and advancement of our neighbor is it necessary that our talks and conversations should be of God, but for our own advancement and

preservation also, that by such speaking of God we may kindle and inflame our hearts with His love. Such is the proper effect of the like conversations, as we see in those two disciples that on the way to the castle of Emmaus were speaking of these things. *Was not our heart on fire and burning?* (Luke xxiv. 32). And it is our own experience sometimes that we come forth from some of these conversations more moved and devout than from sermons. Sur-ius relates of St. Thomas Aquinas that his talks and conversations with all were of holy things, and things profitable for the salvation of souls, and that was one of the reasons why, after speaking and dealing with men, he could readily recollect himself for prayer and meditation on divine things, because, as his conversations were on the things of God and his words were spoken with consideration, they did not distract or hinder him from prayer.

Of our Father Francis Xavier, one of the things most worthy of admiration related in his Life is the way he contrived to unite business and the seeing of many people with prayer. Applying himself as he did to many things, and being taken up with important affairs, and traveling continually by land and by sea among so many labors and dangers, and being so polite and courteous in his intercourse with all, nevertheless he ever led an interior life in the presence of God, and so, holding himself aloof from business and intercourse with his neighbor, he entered very easily and readily straightway into meditation and familiar dealing with his heavenly Spouse. And there is the explanation—that, as the occupation had not distracted him, it was easy for him to return to what he had never left. Contrariwise, if our dealings and words and conversations are not of God, we run much risk. Our blessed Father Ignatius used to say that, as familiar dealings and conversation with our neighbor are of much fruit and edification to him and very proper to the Society if it be done as it ought, so on the other hand, if we do not know how to converse as we

ought, it will be very disedifying to him and very dangerous to ourselves. St. Bernard says: "Idle words easily defile the heart, and when we enjoy hearing and speaking of a thing, we are very near to doing it."

It is true that sometimes in talks and conversations with our neighbor it is necessary to go in at his door; but, as our Father says, that must only be to come out by our own. They should not carry us away so that we should go in by their door and come out by the same; but we must come out always by our own, drawing them to us and to God by profitable and edifying conversation. And for this there is no need to observe ever so many points and ever so many circumstances and conjunctures. If you are so particular about that, you will never come out by your own door, and they will remain by theirs. Let all understand that we are religious, and that this is our business, and that in dealing with us they must not waste time nor talk of useless things, but that we must speak of God and of things profitable to salvation. If they do not want that, let them not come to talk to us. And so we read of our Father that, if he received a visit from any idle man with whom he was likely to waste much time and do no good, after having given him a pleasant reception once or twice, if he continued his visits without profit, our Father would begin to speak to him about death, judgment, and hell; for, he said, if the man had no liking for such conversation, he would get tired and not return any more; while if he had a liking for them, he would gather some spiritual fruit for his soul.

St. Augustine in confirmation of this says: It is true we must endeavor to accommodate ourselves to all in order to gain all, as did St. Paul—I *became all things to all* (I Cor. ix. 22), I became sorrowful with the sorrowful—because it is a great comfort to one in sorrow to see that another is sorrowful too and feels his distress, while we show joy with one in joy; but this accommodating of ourselves to our neighbor and putting ourselves in his place must be done

in such a way as to alleviate his distress and raise and draw him out of his misery without ourselves' falling into the like misery: *sic tamen ut ad auxilium, non ad aequalitatem miseriae valeat*. And he illustrates this by a good comparison. As one wishing to lend a hand to another that has fallen, to get him up again, is careful not to throw himself on the ground nor let himself fall as the other is fallen, but plants his foot and stands firm that the other may not drag him down, stooping just a little so far as is necessary to help him; so in this way we must accommodate ourselves to seculars and make ourselves one of their set, lowering ourselves and showing that we too are human in some little way, going in at their door to win them over; at the same time always standing fast and resting well on our supports that they may not drag us over, but we may come off with our own.

And let us persuade ourselves of this truth, that one of the things that particularly edifies those with whom we come in contact is to see that our conversation is always of good and profitable things; and though some at the beginning apparently have no taste for that, afterwards on reflection they are edified and have a better opinion and esteem of us, for after all they acknowledge that that is the main thing in life. On the other hand, if they see that we go in and come out with them in their worldly conversations and that we have the same tastes in those matters as they have, possibly they may take us for friends as they would take any other man of the world, but not for spiritual men, and so will be lost our authority and influence for doing any good in their souls. Let it be our aim, then, in this matter to hold up the good name of our order and the example of our fathers of old. Of our Father Francis Borgia we read that, if he received a visit from secular persons from whom he could make no bodily escape, and they brought in topics of conversation not to the point, he paid no attention to their talk, but kept his heart and spirit fixed

on God. Some fathers admonished him that he made mistakes in this way and sometimes said things that had nothing to do with the matter on hand. He replied that he had rather be taken for a silly man than lose his time, since he counted all the time lost that was not employed in God and for God. This is in accordance with what Cassian recounts of the Abbot Machetus, who by long prayers had obtained of our Lord this favor, that in spiritual conversations and conferences at any hour of the day or night he never slept; but if any idle and useless topic were brought in, off he went to sleep immediately.

Let us conclude with a general recommendation that St. Bernard gave to a religious: "Let him so behave in all things as to edify those who see him, so that none that sees or hears him can doubt but that he is a monk indeed." Which is what the Apostle says, writing to his disciple Titus: *In all things show thyself a pattern of good works, in doctrine, in integrity, in gravity, a sound word beyond reproach, that any adversary may be confounded, finding nothing evil to say of us* (Tit. ii. 7-8).

Let us endeavor to give good example and edification all round, that not our friends alone may have something on which to dwell with satisfaction, but those who are jealous of us may be confounded and ashamed, seeing they find nothing to say against us or lay hold of to censure.

It is related of a philosopher that, when someone told him they were telling stories about him to take away his character, he answered: "I will live in such a way that no one shall believe people who tell stories to my discredit." That is how we should live, taking care not only to let nothing appear in our words and actions worthy of reprehension, but that our life and behavior shall be such as to take away all credit from any who may calumniate us. That is the best way to meet these story-tellers, to be silent with our mouth, and answer by our deeds.

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CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Humility, and the Need We Have of It

LEARN of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, says Jesus Christ our Redeemer, *and ye shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). The blessed St. Augustine says: "The whole life of Christ on earth was a lesson to us, and He was master of all virtues, but especially of humility; it was that particularly which He wished us to learn of Him." That were enough for us to understand how great must be the excellence of this virtue and how great the need that we have of it, since the Son of God came down from heaven to earth to teach it to us and wished to be our special instructor therein, not in word alone, but much more particularly in work, since all His life was an example and living pattern of humility. The glorious St. Basil goes through the whole life of Christ from His birth, showing and reflecting how all His actions teach us particularly this virtue. He chose, he says, to be born of a poor mother, in a poor stable and in a manger, and to be wrapped in poor swaddling clothes. He chose to be circumcised as a sinner, to fly into Egypt as too weak to protect Himself, to be baptized among sinners and publicans as though He were one of them. Afterwards in the course of His life, when they sought to honor and exalt Him for king, He hid Himself; and when they sought to outrage and dishonor Him, then He put Himself in their power. When men and even those possessed by devils would extol Him, He bade them be silent; and when they mocked Him, uttering injurious words, He said nothing. And at the end of His life, to leave us a further commendation of this virtue, as His last will and testament, He confirmed it by that mar-

velous example of washing His disciples' feet, and that so ignominious death on the Cross.

St. Bernard says: "The Son of God abased and reduced Himself by taking human nature; and all His life He strove to be a pattern of humility, to teach us by deed what He had to teach us by word. Marvelous manner of teaching!" But why, Lord, is so great a majesty so humbled? *Ut non apponat ultra magnificare se homo super terram* (Psalm ix. 18)—"That from this time forth there may be no man daring to be proud and lift himself up upon the earth." It was always folly and impudence for man to be proud; but particularly now that the Majesty of God has abased and humbled Himself, says St. Bernard, "it is shamelessness intolerable and gross vulgarity for a vile worm of a man to seek to be regarded and esteemed. The Son of God, equal to His Father, takes the form of a servant and chooses to be humbled and treated with ignominy; and do I, dust and ashes, seek to be regarded and esteemed?"

With good reason does the Redeemer of the world say that He is the master of this virtue, and that we must learn it of Him; for this virtue of humility is one which neither Plato nor Socrates nor Aristotle knew how to teach. While they treated of other virtues, as fortitude, temperance, and justice, the heathen philosophers were so far from being humble that in these very acts and in all their virtues their aim was to be well thought of and bequeath a memory of themselves to posterity. A Diogenes and others like him spoke well, inasmuch as they showed themselves despisers of the world and of themselves, in poor clothes, in poverty, and in abstinence; but in the very act of doing that they showed great pride, seeking by that means to be admired and esteemed, while they despised others, as Plato shrewdly observed to Diogenes. One day Plato invited sundry philosophers, and among them Diogenes, to dinner. He had his house well decked out, his carpets laid down, and much other preparation, as befitted the

dignity of such guests. Diogenes, on coming in, began trampling with his dirty feet on those carpets. Plato said to him: "What are you about?" He said: "I am trampling on and bringing down the pomp and pride of Plato." Plato answered very well: "So you are, but with other pride;" meaning that he was showing more pride in trampling on his carpets than himself in keeping such furniture. Those philosophers did not attain to true contempt of themselves, in which Christian humility consists. They did not even know the virtue of humility so much as by name; it is our peculiar virtue taught by Christ.

St. Augustine remarks that hereby began that masterful Sermon on the Mount: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3). St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and other saints say that by poor in spirit is to be understood the humble. By this the Redeemer of the world began His preaching, by this He went on with it, by this He concluded it; this He taught us all His life long, this He wished us to learn of Him. St. Augustine says: "He did not say, learn of Me to make heaven and earth, learn of Me to do wonders and miracles, to heal the sick, cast out devils, to raise the dead, but, learn of Me to be meek and humble of heart." Better the humble man who serves God than the man who works miracles. This is the plain and sure way; the other is full of pitfalls and dangers.

The need that we have of this virtue is so great that without it it is impossible to take one step in the service of God. The glorious St. Augustine says: "All our works must be guarded and accompanied by humility in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end; for if we are ever so little careless and allow vain complacency to come in, all will be carried away by the wind of pride." Little will it profit us that the work in itself be good; rather on that account we have greater reason to fear the vice of pride and vainglory; since other vices are concerned with sin and evil things—envy, anger, lust—and so carry on them a

label bidding us beware of them, but pride goes after good works to destroy them. The man was prosperously under way with his heart set on heaven, since at starting he had directed to God what he was doing; when suddenly there comes a squall of vanity and throws him on a rock; he desires to please men and be regarded and esteemed by them; he takes thereon some vain complacency, whereupon his bark founders entirely. So St. Gregory and St. Bernard say very well: "He who seeks to gain virtues without humility, is like one carrying a little dust or ashes in the teeth of the wind; it is all scattered, all blown away by the gale"—*Qui sine humilitate virtutes congregat, quasi in ventum pulverem portat.*

CHAPTER II

That Humility Is the Foundation of All Virtues

ST. CYPRIAN says: "Humility is the foundation of sanctity." St. Jerome: "The first virtue of Christians is humility." St. Bernard: "Humility is the foundation and safeguard of all virtues." St. Gregory in one place calls it "mistress and mother of all virtues," and in another says that it is the "root and origin of virtues." This metaphor and comparison of *root* is very proper and declares well the properties and conditions of humility. For in the first place, as the flower is supported by the root and withers when it is cut off from it, so whatever virtue there be, if it perseveres not on the root of humility, withers and is lost at once. Further, as the root is underground, and is trampled and trodden on, and has in itself no beauty nor scent, and yet from it the tree receives its life, so the humble man is buried, trodden upon, and made small account of, and makes no show of luster and splendor, but is cast into a corner and forgotten, and this it is that preserves him and makes him thrive. Further, as for the tree to grow and

last and bear much fruit, the root must strike deep, and the deeper it goes and the further it penetrates the earth, the more the tree will fructify and the longer it will last—*it will thrust its roots below, and bear fruit above*, as the Wise Man says (IV Kings xix. 30)—so the fertility and preservation of virtues lies in their casting deep roots of humility. The more humble you are, the more you will thrive and grow in virtue and perfection. Finally, as pride is the root and beginning of all sin, as the Wise Man says—*The beginning of all sin is pride* (Ecclus. x. 15)—so the saints say that humility is the root and foundation of all virtue.

But someone will say: "How can you say that humility is the foundation of all virtues and of the spiritual edifice, when the saints say in common that faith is the foundation, according to that saying of St. Paul: *Other foundation can no man lay but that which is laid already, which is Christ Jesus* (I Cor. iii. 11)?" To this St. Thomas very aptly replies: Two things are requisite to lay a foundation well. First it is necessary to open well the trenches and cast out all the loose earth until you arrive at firm ground to build it upon; and after having dug the trench deep and thrown out all the loose earth, they begin to lay the foundation upon stone, which, with the other stones that are laid upon it, makes the main foundation of the building. So, St. Thomas goes on to say, are humility and faith in the spiritual foundation and fabric of virtues. Humility is that which opens the ground; its office is to dig the trench deep, and throw out all the loose stuff, that is, the weakness of human strength. You must not build on your own strength, for that is all sand: all *that* you must cast out, having no confidence in yourself; you must go on digging until you arrive at the living rock and firm stone, which is Christ (I Cor. x. 4). That is the principal foundation; but to rest upon it the other is necessary, which is the work of humility. Thus humility is also called the foundation.

Humility, then, will open the trenches and immerge a man in the knowledge of himself and cast out all the loose earth of self-esteem and self-confidence, until it reaches the true foundation, which is Christ. Such a man will set up a good building; and though the winds buffet it, and the waters rise around it, it will not be upset, because it is founded on a firm rock. But if a man build without humility, his building will speedily fall, as being founded on sand.

They are not true, out apparent and false virtues, that are not founded on humility. Thus St. Augustine says, in those ancient Romans and philosophers there were no true virtues, not only for lack of charity, which is the form and vital principle of all, without which there is no true and perfect virtue, but also for lack of the foundation of humility. Their aim in their fortitude, their justice, their temperance, was to be esteemed and leave a good name behind them; their virtues were hollow and devoid of substance, a mere shadow of virtues. And being such, not true, but apparent, they were rewarded by God in the Romans with the goods of this life, which also are apparent goods. If, then, you wish to build up true virtues in your soul, endeavor first to lay a good foundation of humility.

St. Augustine says: "If you wish to be great and raise a high edifice of virtues, dig the foundations well. And the deeper the foundations must go, the higher one wishes to raise the building, for there is no height without depth. Thus in the measure and proportion in which you go down and cast the foundations of humility, the higher you will be able to raise this tower of evangelical perfection which you have begun. St. Thomas Aquinas, among other grave utterances which are quoted of his, says that whoever is motivated by a desire of honor, whoever shuns being made small account of and is grieved when that befalls him, even though he do wonders, is far from perfection, because all his virtue is destitute of foundation.

CHAPTER III

*In Which It Is Shown More in Detail How Humility Is the
Foundation of All Virtues, by Going Through
the Chief of Them*

THE better to see how true is this pronouncement of the saints, that humility is the foundation of all virtues, and how necessary this foundation is for them all, we will run briefly through the more principal virtues. To begin with the theological, humility is necessary for faith. I leave out of count children, in whom faith is infused without act of theirs in baptism; I speak of grown-up people, who have the use of reason. Faith requires a humble and submissive understanding: *Taking our understanding captive to the obedience of faith*, says the Apostle St. Paul (II Cor. x. 5). A proud understanding is an impediment and obstacle to the reception of faith. So said Christ our Redeemer: *How can ye believe in me, since ye seek to be honored of one another, and seek not the honor that is of God alone?* (John v. 44). And not only for the reception of faith is humility necessary, but also for the preservation of it. It is the common doctrine of doctors and saints that pride is the beginning of all heresies. A man gets such a conceit of his own opinion and judgment that he prefers it to the common sentiment of saints and of the Church, and thence he comes to plunge into heresy. So says the Apostle: *Ye must know that in the latter days there will be dangerous times: men will be lovers of themselves, envious, haughty, proud* (II Tim. iii. 1). To elation and pride he ascribes errors and heresies, as does St. Augustine enlarging well on this point. Hope is sustained by humility, since the humble feels his own need and understands that he can do nothing of himself, and so the more heartily does he fall back upon God and puts all his hope in Him.

Charity and love of God is roused and kindled by humility, since the humble man recognizes that all that he has comes from the hand of God and that he is far from deserving it, and by that consideration he is greatly kindled and inflamed to the love of God. Holy Job said: *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, and settest thy heart upon him*, and dost him so many favors and benefits? (vii. 13). I am so evil in dealing with Thee, and Thou art so good in dealing with me! I persist in offending Thee every day, and Thou dost me favors every hour! This is one of the principal motives whereby saints have aided themselves to kindle in their hearts a great love of God. The more they considered their unworthiness and misery, the more they found themselves bound to love God, Who deigned to look upon such a lowly estate as theirs. The most holy Queen of Angels said: *My soul doth magnify the Lord, because he hath cast his eyes on the lowliness of his handmaid* (Luke i. 46, 48).

As for charity towards our neighbor, it is easy to see how necessary humility is for that, since one of the things that usually cool and diminish our love for our brethren is passing judgment upon their faults and holding them for imperfect and defective people. Now the humble man is far from that, since he keeps his eyes on his own faults, and in others sees nothing but their virtues. So he takes them all for good, and himself alone for evil and imperfect and unworthy of being in the company of his brethren; whence there springs in him an esteem and respect and great love for all. Further, the humble man is not aggrieved at all others' being preferred to him; at others' being made much of and himself forgotten; at others' having great charges entrusted to them and himself being entrusted only with mean and petty things. There is no envy among the humble, because envy springs from pride; thus where humility is, there will be no envies, no conflicts, nor anything to cool the love that should be among brethren.

Of humility also springs patience, so necessary in this life, since the humble man knows his faults and sins and sees himself deserving of any and every punishment, and no affliction comes upon him that he does not judge to be less than it ought to be, in accordance with his faults. Thus he is silent and knows not how to complain, but rather says with the Prophet Micheas: *Willingly will I bear the chastisement that God sendeth me, since I have sinned against him* (Mich. vii. 9). As the proud man complains of everything and thinks that they are wronging him, although they are doing no such thing, and that they never treat him as he deserves; so the humble man, though they do treat him unfairly, will not see it, nor takes it for unfairness. He never makes a grievance of anything that they do to him, but rather thinks that he is amply well set up; and whatever way they treat him, he thinks they are treating him better than he deserves. Humility is a great means to patience. So when the Wise Man is admonishing him who wishes to serve God to prepare for temptations and repugnances and to arm himself with patience, the means that he gives him thereto is humility: *Keep thy heart lowly and endure: all that happeneth to thee*, though it be very contrary to thy liking and to sensuality, *take it in good part, and though it hurt thee, suffer it* (Ecclus. ii. 2, 4). But how shall that be? In what armor dost thou clothe me that I may not feel it or that, whatever I already feel, I may bear well? *Have patience in thy humility*. Hold to humility, and thou shalt have patience.

Of humility is born peace, so desired of all and so necessary to the religious. So says Christ our Redeemer: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). Be humble, and you shall have great peace within yourself, and also with your brethren. As among the proud there are always bickerings, contentions, and quarrels, as the Wise Man says: *Among the proud there are always quarrels* (Prov. xiii.

10), so among the humble there cannot be any bickering or dispute, except that holy dispute and quarrel who shall take the lower place and how each may yield the preference to his neighbor. Such was the kindly contention between St. Paul and St. Anthony, who was to divide the loaf, each importuning the other, the one on the score of the other's being the guest, the other on that of his being the senior; each sought a plea to give the preference and yield the superiority to the other. These are good little tiffs and contentions, springing from true humility: such are not contrary to peace and fraternal charity, but rather confirm and preserve it the more.

Let us come to those three virtues which are proper and essential to the religious, the virtues to which we bind ourselves by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poverty has such a close connection and relationship with humility that they seem sisters of one bed. Thus by poverty of spirit, which Christ our Lord put for the first of the beatitudes, some saints understand humility, others voluntary poverty, such as religious profess. Poverty must always go accompanied by humility, for the one without the other is a dangerous thing. It is easy to engender a spirit of vainglory and pride of poor and mean clothes, and thence arises contempt of others. For this reason St. Augustine avoided very poor clothes, and wished his religious to go about dressed becomingly and decently, to escape this bad consequence. On the other hand, humility is equally necessary, that we may not seek to go well provided with everything and want nothing, but rather be content with what is given us, though it be of the worst, because we are poor men and profess poverty. How necessary humility is for the preservation of chastity, we have many examples in the histories of the Fathers of the Desert of foul and shameful falls in men who had done many years of penance and solitary life, all which came from

want of humility and from presumption and confidence in self, a sin which God is wont to punish by permitting the like falls. Humility is such a great ornament of chastity and virginal purity that St. Bernard says: "I venture to say that, without humility, even the virginity of our Lady would not have pleased God." Let us come to the virtue of obedience, in which our Father wished that we of the Society should signalize ourselves. It is clear that he cannot be very obedient who is not humble, nor he cease to be obedient who is humble. The humble man holds no judgment to the contrary, but conforms himself in all to that of the superior; thus in action as in will and judgment there is no contradiction or resistance.

To come now to prayer, which is the mainstay of the life of the religious and of the spiritual man, if it be not accompanied by humility, it is of no value, whereas prayer with humility pierces the heavens: *The prayer of him that humbleth himself, says the Wise Man, shall pierce the heavens, and shall not stop short till it reach the throne of the Most High, and not depart thence till it obtaineth of God all that it asketh* (Ecclus. xxxv. 21). That holy and humble Judith, shut up in her oratory, clad in sackcloth, covered with ashes, prostrate on the ground, spoke aloud and cried out: *The prayer of the humble and meek of heart hath ever been pleasing to thee, O Lord* (Judith ix. 16). *God hath regarded the prayer of the humble, and hath not despised their petitions* (Psalm ci. 18). *Have no fear of the humble being rejected or departing in confusion* (Psalm lxxiii. 21), he shall gain his request, and God will hear his prayer. See how pleased God was with that humble prayer of the publican in the Gospel, who dared not raise his eyes to heaven nor approach the altar, but in a far corner of the Temple smote his breast in humble acknowledgment and said: *Lord, be merciful to me, who am a great sinner* (Luke xviii. 13). *Of a truth I tell you, says Christ our Redeemer, that this man went home from the Temple justified, while*

the proud Pharisee, who took himself for a good man, went out condemned. In this way we might run through the rest of the virtues; so if you wish for a short cut to attain them all and a brief and compendious lesson how to come quickly to perfection, here it is—*Be humble.*

CHAPTER IV

Of the Particular Need in Which They Stand of This Virtue, Whose Profession It Is to Help On the Salvation of Their Neighbor

THE greater thou art, humble thyself the more, in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God (Ecclus. iii. 20). We who profess to gain souls to God hold the office of great men—to our confusion we may say it; the Lord has called us to a very exalted state, since our institute is to serve holy Church in very high and lofty ministries, such as those to which God chose the apostles; namely, the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments and of His own most Precious Blood: so that we can say with St. Paul: *He hath given us the ministry of reconciliation* (II Cor. v. 18). He calls the grace of preaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments, whereby grace is imparted, “the ministry of reconciliation.” *He hath committed to us the preaching of reconciliation: we are ambassadors of Christ.* God has made us His ministers, His ambassadors, as it were His apostles, legates of the Sovereign Pontiff Jesus Christ. Our tongues are instruments of the Holy Ghost, *God Himself exhorting by our mouth* (II Cor. v. 19-20). Through us the Lord is pleased to speak to souls; through these tongues of flesh the Lord will move the hearts of men.

Now for this we have greater need than other men of the virtue of humility, for two reasons. First, because the more sublime our institute and the higher our vocation, the

greater is our danger and the stronger the assaults of pride and vanity. It is the higher mountains, says St. Jerome, that are the more wind-swept and buffeted by storms. We are engaged in very high ministrations and on that account are respected and esteemed by all the world; we are taken for saints and for new apostles on earth; it is understood that our business is all sanctity and the making of saints out of those with whom we deal. A good strong foundation of humility is necessary for so high a building not to crash down to the ground. Great strength and great stock of virtue is needed to bear the weight of honor and the occasions of sin that go with being honored; a hard thing it is to have honors showered on us as we walk without our heart's being in any way affected, and not all men's heads are strong enough to move in high places. Oh, how many have swooned and fallen from the high estate in which they once were, for want of this good grounding in humility! How many, who seemed eagles soaring aloft in the practice of virtues, through pride have been turned into bats! That monk was a worker of miracles, of whom it is written in the Life of St. Pacomius and St. Palemon that he walked on blazing embers without being burned; but on that same feat he prided himself and held others to scorn, and said of himself: "Which of you will do as much as that?" St. Palemon corrected him, seeing that it was pride; and in the end he came to fall miserably and make an evil end. Scripture and the lives of the saints are full of like examples.

On this account, then, we stand in special need of being well grounded in this virtue, since otherwise we would be in great danger of losing our heads with vanity and falling into the sin of pride, and that the greatest pride there is, which is spiritual pride. St. Bonaventure, illustrating this point, says that there are two sorts of pride, one of temporal things, which he calls fleshly pride, and the other of spiritual things, which he calls spiritual pride; and the latter he says is a greater pride and a worse sin than the for-

mer. And the reason is clear; for the proud man, as St. Bonaventure says, is a thief, committing theft inasmuch as he takes away another's property against the will of the owner. The man exalts himself with the glory and honor that belongs to God, and which God will not give to any other, but reserves for Himself. *My glory, I will not give to another*, He says by Isaias (xlii. 8). That is what the proud man wishes to steal away from God, and exalt himself thereon, and attribute it to himself. Now when a man is proud of a happy disposition, of a nobility, of a healthy and well-formed body, a good understanding, letters, and other like abilities, he is a thief; but the theft is not so great, for while it is true that all these goods are of God, yet they are but the chaff and bran of His house; but he who is proud of spiritual gifts, of sanctity, of the fruit of gains in souls, is a great thief and robber of the honor of God—a robber of the first magnitude, who steals the richest and most precious jewels, jewels of the greatest value in the sight of God, Who sets such store by them that for them He gave His blood and life, and thought it a good bargain. So the blessed St. Francis lived in great fear of falling into this pride, and used to say to God: "Lord, if Thou givest me anything, take care of it Thyself; for I dare not undertake the charge, seeing that I am a great robber who make my own fortune with Thy goods." Let us, then, also live in this fear. We have more reason to feel it, since we are not so humble as St. Francis. Let us not fall into so dangerous a pride; let us not make our own fortune with the goods of God that we handle and God has entrusted to us with much confidence; let us take no complacency in them, nor attribute anything to ourselves; let us return the whole to God.

Not without great mystery did Christ our Redeemer, when He appeared to His disciples on the day of His glorious Ascension, first reprove them for their incredulity and hardness of heart (Mark xvi. 14), and afterwards com-

mand them to go and preach the Gospel all over the world and give them power to work many great miracles. Thereby He gave us to understand that whoever is to be elevated to great things must first be humbled and abased in himself and know his own weaknesses and miseries; to the end that, though he afterwards soar above the heavens and work miracles, he may remain rooted in knowledge of himself and taken up with his own lowliness. Theodoret notes to this effect how, when God meant to choose Moses for captain and head of His people and work through him so many marvels and signs as He intended to work, His will was first of all that that hand which was to divide the waters of the Red Sea, and do so many other marvelous thing, Moses was to place within his bosom and draw out full of leprosy (Exod. iv. 6).

The second reason why we stand in particular need of humility is to produce fruit by the ministries which we exercise. Thus humility is not only necessary for ourselves and for our own spiritual profit, that we may not get vain and proud and so lose ourselves, but also to gain over our neighbors and produce fruit in their souls. One of the chiefest and most effectual means to this is humility, whereby we distrust ourselves and put no reliance on our own abilities, industry, and prudence, but put all our confidence in God, and to Him we refer and attribute all, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Put confidence in God with thy whole heart, and rely not on thine own prudence* (Prov. iii. 5). The reason of this, as we shall say presently more at large, is because when, having no confidence in ourselves but putting all our confidence in God, we attribute all to Him and give Him charge of all, we thereby greatly oblige Him to take the matter up. Lord, do Thy business: the conversion of souls is Thy business and not ours; what good are we for that? But when we go about the matter full of confidence in our own expedients and our own reasons, we make ourselves partners in the business,

attributing much to ourselves, and all that we take away from God. It is like the two scales in a balance; when the one goes up, the other goes down; whatever we attribute to ourselves, we take away from God, and endeavor to exalt ourselves with the glory and honor which is properly His; and so He permits all our doings to come to nothing. Would to God that sometimes this be not the reason why we do not produce so much fruit in our neighbor!

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that by the talks on Christian doctrine that he held in Rome, plain utterances with unpolished and incorrect words, as he was only imperfectly acquainted with Italian, he did so much good to souls that, when the discourse was over, the hearers went, with hearts smitten with grief, sighing and sobbing to the feet of their confessor, hardly able to speak for their tears and sobs. That was because he did not put his strength in words, but in the Spirit—not in rhetoric of human wisdom, but in the manifestation of the Spirit and power of God, as St. Paul says (I Cor. ii. 4). He had no confidence in himself and put all his confidence in God, and so God gave such force and spirit to those unpolished and incorrect words that he seemed to pour them out like a torrent, as it were, of flames kindling the hearts of the hearers. I do not know but that God's not producing such fruit nowadays is because we rest much on our own prudence and are greatly buoyed up with confidence in our own methods of urging considerations, our literary style and reasonings, our highly polished and elegant diction, and so we find great relish and satisfaction in ourselves. But I will bring it about, says God, that just when you have said the finest things and elaborated the best body of argument, and are very well satisfied and proud of yourself and think that you have really done something, you shall then do less than ever, and that word shall be accomplished in you which was spoken by the Prophet Osee: *Give them, O Lord, what wilt thou give them? Give them barren wombs without chil-*

dren, and dry breasts without milk (ix. 14) : I will bring it about *that you shall have nothing more than a name*—Father Mombo Bombo the Great Preacher—the name alone shall remain to you, and you shall have no spiritual children. I will give you dry breasts, that children may not hold on to you, nor what you say take any hold on them. This is what he deserves who seeks to make his fortune out of the property of God and to attribute to himself what belongs to His Divine Majesty.

I am not saying that you are to go into the pulpit without having right well studied and well looked up the matter of your sermon. But that is not enough; it must also have been right well wept over and commended to God; and after you have broken your head with study and reflection you must say: *We are useless servants, what we were bound to do we have done* (Luke xvii. 10). What can I do? At most make a little noise with my words, like a musket without ball, but as for its going home to the heart, Thou, O Lord, must give that: *The King's heart is in the hands of the Lord: wherever he wishes, he will incline it* (Prov. xxi. 1). Thou, O Lord, art He Who must pierce and move hearts; what good are we for that? What proportion is there in our words and in any human motives at our command, with an end so high and supernatural as the conversion of souls? None. Why, then, are we so proud and satisfied with ourselves when it seems that some good is being done and our efforts are crowned with success, as if we had accomplished anything? *Shall the axe, says God, glory, or the saw, against him that worketh with it, saying: It is I that have cut, I that have sawn the timber? It is as though the stuff were to exalt itself and grow saucy because they raise it, whereas it is but a piece of wood that can do nothing for itself unless they take it in hand* (Isaias x. 15). In this relation, then, we stand to God in respect of the spiritual and supernatural end of the conversion of souls. We are as pieces of wood, inasmuch as we cannot stir nor guide

our own movements if God does not guide them. And so we must attribute all to Him, and we have nothing of our own to glory in.

God makes great account of our not relying on our own abilities and human means and attributing nothing to ourselves, but attributing all to Him and giving Him the glory of all. For this reason, St. Paul says, Christ our Redeemer did not choose learned men for the preaching of the Gospel and the conversion of the world, nor eloquent men, but poor fishermen, uneducated and without letters. *God hath chosen the ignorant and uneducated to confound the wise ones of the world; he hath chosen the poor and the weak to confound the strong and powerful; he hath chosen the lowly and abject of the world, and what appeared as nothing in it, to put to rout kings and emperors and all the great ones of earth* (I Cor. i. 27). Do you know why? St. Paul tells you: *That man may not glory in the sight of God, nor have any occasion to attribute anything to himself, but that he who glorieth should glory in the Lord* (I Cor. i. 29-31; Jerem. ix. 23-24). If the preachers of the Gospel had been very rich and powerful, and with a mighty host and armed forces had traversed the world to preach the Gospel, the conversion might have been attributed to the power and force of arms. If God had chosen to this end great doctors and even great rhetoricians of the world, who by their learning and eloquence had convinced the philosophers, the conversion might have been attributed to their eloquence and the subtlety of their arguments, and to that extent the credit and reputation of the power of Christ would have been diminished. But it was not done in that way. As St. Paul says: *God willed not that it should be done by wisdom and eloquence of words, not to lessen our esteem of the power and efficacy of the cross and passion of Christ* (I Cor. i. 17). St. Augustine says: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, wishing to bend and bow down the necks of the proud, did not seek fishermen through orators, but through

poor fishermen He overthrew and won over orators and emperors. Cyprian was a great orator, but before him Peter was a fisherman, that through him the orator might believe and be converted, and not the orator only, but even the emperor"—*Non quaesivit per oratorem piscatorem, sed e piscatore lucratus est imperatorem. Magnus Cyprianus orator, sed prius Petrus piscator, per quem postea crederet non solum orator sed et imperator.*

Holy Scripture is full of instances in which God chose weak instruments and intermediaries to do great things, to teach us that truth and fix it firm in our hearts, that we have nothing to glory in, nothing to attribute to ourselves, but should refer it all to God. That is the moral pointed to us by that signal victory of Judith, one weak woman against an army of more than a hundred and forty thousand men. That is the moral pointed to us by a poor shepherd David, a youth without arms, with his sling overthrowing the giant Goliath. *That all the world may know, says the text, that there is a God in Israel, and all may understand that he needeth not sword nor lance to conquer, but his is the battle and his the victory* (I Kings xvii. 46).

Such also was the mystery of Gedeon, who had assembled thirty-two thousand men against the Madianites, who were more than one hundred and thirty thousand. God said to him: *There is much people with thee, nor shall Madian be delivered into their hands* (Judges vii. 2). See what a reasoning that was of God: "Thou canst not conquer, because thou art many." If He had said: "Thou canst not conquer, because they are many, and you few," it looks as if He would have had something to go upon. You are mistaken, you do not understand; that would have been a piece of human reasoning, but quite different is the reasoning of God. "You cannot be victorious, because you are too many." And why not? *That Israel may not glory against me and say, By the strength of my own arm I have wrought my own deliverance,* and pride itself on the victory, think-

ing that by its own resources it had gained the day. God's plan was that only three hundred men should remain with Gedeon, and with these He bade him give battle to the enemy, and with these He gave him the victory. And even for that it was not necessary to put on armor or lay hand to sword. By the mere sounding of the trumpets which they held in one hand, and the noise of the breaking pitchers and the brightness of the lighted lamps which they held in the other, God struck such terror and confusion into the enemy that they fell foul of one another and slew one another in flight, thinking that the whole world was upon them. Now you shall not say that it was by your own strength that you were victorious. That is what God intends.

Now if in temporal and human things, in which the means that we take do bear some proportion to the end, and our strength some proportion to the victory, God would not have us attribute anything to ourselves, but would have the victory in battle and the good success of our business all put down to Him; if even in the work of nature neither he that plants nor he that waters goes for anything—it is not the gardener who makes the plants grow and the trees bear fruit, but God—what shall it be in spiritual and supernatural things regarding the conversion of souls and their advancement and increase in virtue, where our applications, powers, and attentions fall so far short that there is no proportion between them and so high an end! So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Neither he who planteth is anything, or he who watereth, but God alone is he who can give the increase and spiritual fruit* (I Cor. iii. 7). God alone can strike terror and alarm into the hearts of men. God alone can make men abhor their sins and abandon their evil life; all we can do is to make a little noise with the trumpet of the Gospel. And if we break the pitchers of our bodies by mortification, that so our light may shine before men by an exemplary life, it will be no little thing for us to have done that much; with that, God will give the victory.

Let us draw from this two lessons that will be a great help to us to carry on our ministrations with much consolation and profit, as well our own as that of our neighbor. The first is what has been said, that we should distrust ourselves and put our whole confidence in God, and attribute to Him all the fruit and good success of our efforts: "Let us not be proud, but own ourselves useless, that so we may be useful and profitable." And St. Ambrose says: If you wish to do much good to your neighbor, observe the instruction which the Apostle St. Peter teaches us: *Let him who speaketh account that God putteth the words in his mouth; let him who worketh account that God it is that worketh in his place, and give him the glory and honor of all* (I Pet. iv. 11). Let us not attribute to ourselves anything; let us pride ourselves on nothing, nor take vain satisfaction anywhere.

The second lesson that we have to learn is not to be discouraged or lose heart in view of our feebleness and misery. We stand in great need of this lesson also; since, seeing himself called to so high and supernatural an end as is the conversion of souls, the drawing of them out of sins, heresies, and misbeliefs, who that casts his eyes upon himself can help being filled with dismay! Good Lord, where is there a disproportion so great! "I am not the man for this enterprise, seeing that I am the most necessitous and most miserable of all." Oh, how mistaken you are! Rather on this very account you are the man for this enterprise. Moses could not bring himself to believe that he was to do so great a work as to lead the people of Israel out of the captivity of Egypt, and excused himself before God, Who wished to send him to it. *Who am I to go and speak to the King, and make him allow the people of Israel to go out of Egypt? Send, O Lord, him whom thou art to send* (Exod. iii. 11; iv. 13), *I am not the man to do it, seeing that I am slow of speech.* That is what I wanted, says God, for it is not thou who art to do it. *I will be with thee, and I will*

teach thee what to say. The same happened to the Prophet Jeremy. God wished to send him to preach to the nations, and he began to excuse himself. *Ah, ah, ah, Lord, seest thou not that I cannot speak to the point, seeing that I am but a child* (Jerem. i. 6). How canst thou wish to send me on such a great errand? Even on that very account that thou reckonest correctly, it is the very thing that God is seeking. On the other hand, if thou wert possessed of great abilities, perhaps God would not choose thee for the work, because thou wouldst take pride therein, and attribute the doing of it to thyself. It is God's way to choose humble folk, people who attribute nothing to themselves, and by them He wishes to do great things.

The holy Gospels relate that, when the apostles came from preaching, Christ our Redeemer, seeing the fruit they had gathered and the great wonders they had done, rejoiced in the Holy Ghost and began to glorify and give thanks to His eternal Father. *I give thee thanks, Eternal Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent of the world, and hast revealed them to little ones, and by them hast willed to do so many marvels and miracles: blessed and praised be thou, O Lord, forever, for so it hath pleased thee* (Luke x. 21). Oh, how blessed are the little ones! Blessed are the humble, they who attribute nothing to themselves: for these are they whom God raises up; these are they by whom He works wonders; them He takes for instruments to work great things, great conversions and great fruit of souls. Therefore let none be discouraged, let none lose heart. *Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father to give you the kingdom* (Luke xii. 32). Be not alarmed nor discouraged, thou least Society of Jesus, for it has pleased your heavenly Father to lay open to you the souls and hearts of men. "I will be with you," said Christ our Redeemer to our Father Ignatius on his way to Rome. *Ego vobis Romae propitius ero.* "I will aid you, I will be in

your company." From this miracle and marvelous apparition there has been given to our order this name, the appellation of "Society of Jesus," that we may understand that we are not called to the Society and Order of Ignatius, but to the Society of Jesus, and make sure that Jesus will ever be at hand to help us as He promised our Father, and that we have Him for Leader and Captain, *candillo y capitan*, and so should not grow faint or disheartened over this so great enterprise of the help of souls to which God has called us.

CHAPTER V

Of the First Degree of Humility, Which Is to Make Little Account of Oneself and Always Think Poorly of Oneself

ST. LAWRENCE JUSTINIAN says that no one knows well what humility is except him who has received of God the gift of being humble. It is a very difficult thing to know. In nothing, says the saint, is man so mistaken as in the discernment of true humility. Think you it consists in saying, "I am a wretched proud fellow?" If it consisted in that, it would be a very easy matter; we should all be humble, since we all avow that we are some of us So-So, and other of us Oh-Oh, none of us any better than we should be. God grant that that may be our real sentiment, and that we do not say it with the lips only and for form's sake. Think you that humility consists in wearing poor cheap clothes and being engaged in lowly and mean occupations? It does not consist in that, for there also there may be much pride, and desire of being regarded and esteemed, and taking oneself to be better and more humble than others, which is a subtle form of pride. It is true that these exterior things are great aids to true humility if they are taken as they ought, as we shall say further on; but after all humility does not consist in them. St. Jerome says: "Many go

after the shadow and appearance of humility. An easy thing it is to carry one's head bent forward, eyes on the ground, to speak in an undertone, to sigh frequently, and at every word to call ourselves miserable sinners; but if you touch these people up with one word, though it be a very light one, you will at once see how far they are from true humility. Let all these artificial phrases be dropped, all those hypocrisies and outward pretensions be cast out. The truly humble man shows himself in patience and endurance. This," says St. Jerome, "is the touchstone by which true humility is known."

St. Bernard descends further into details, explaining what this virtue is, and lays down its definition. "Humility is a virtue whereby man, considering and seeing his defects and miseries, is vile in his own eyes." Humility does not consist in words, nor in exterior things, but lies in the depths of the heart, in cherishing lowly sentiments of oneself, in taking oneself to be of little account and wishing oneself to be so taken and of low repute among others, all this springing from a most profound knowledge of oneself. Further to declare and particularize this, the saints assign many degrees of humility. St. Benedict, whom St. Thomas and other saints follow, assigns twelve degrees. St. Anselm assigns seven. St. Bonaventure reduces them to three; and that is the enumeration we shall for the present follow for brevity's sake, and also that, by gathering the doctrine into fewer points, we may the better keep it before our eyes and put it in execution.

The first degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is for a man to make little account of himself and think meanly of himself, and the one necessary means to this is knowledge of oneself. These are the two things included in the definition of humility given by St. Bernard, and thus it includes only this first degree. Humility is a virtue whereby a man makes little account of himself; you see there the first degree. And this he does, says St. Bernard, by having

a true knowledge of himself and of his miseries and defects. On this account some assign for the first degree of humility this knowledge of oneself, and with good reason. But for ourselves, as we reduce all the degrees to St. Bonaventure's three, we put for the first degree of humility the making little account of oneself; and as for self-knowledge, we put it down as the necessary means to gain this degree of humility: but in substance it all comes to the same thing. We are all agreed in this, that knowledge of oneself is the first principle and foundation for the attainment of humility and the reckoning of ourselves for what we really are. For how can you take a man for what he is if you do not know what he is? It cannot be; it is necessary for you first to know what you are, and so you will reckon and esteem yourself accordingly. Thus it is necessary for you first to know what you are, and then reckon yourself for what you are. You have license to do that, since if you reckon yourself for what you are, you will be very humble, for you will make very little account of yourself; but if you wish to reckon yourself for more than you are, that is pride. St. Isidore says: "A man is called proud from his taking himself, and wishing to be taken by others, for something above what he is and more than he is"—*Superbus dictus est qui vult videri plus quam est*. And this is one of the reasons which some give for God's loving humility so much, because He is a great lover of truth, and humility is truth, while pride and presumption is a lie and deceit, for you are not what you think to be and wish to have others think you are. If you wish, then, to live in truth and humility, take yourself to be what you are. Surely no one should think that we are asking too much in asking you to take yourself for what you are and not wishing to be taken for more, since it is not reasonable for anyone to take himself for more than he is; rather it would be a very great and dangerous delusion for anyone to be deceived about himself, taking himself for some other than what he is.

CHAPTER VI

Of Self-Knowledge as the Root, and the Sole and Necessary Means to Attain Humility

LET us begin to dig and go down deep in what we are and in the knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, that so we may discover this richest of treasures. St. Jerome says: "Go into this dunghill of your mean and abject condition, of your sins and miseries; there you shall find the precious pearls of humility." Let us begin with our bodily condition; let that be the first blow of the pickax. "Keep these three things ever before your eyes," says St. Bernard, "what you were, what you are, what you shall be. Keep ever before your eyes what you were before you were begotten, that is, matter foul and filthy beyond expression; what you are now, that is, a sack of ordure; what you shall be shortly, that is, food for worms." We have a good deal here to meditate and dig into. Well may Pope Innocent cry out: "O base and vile condition of human nature! Look at the trees and herbs of the field, and you will find that they produce and bring forth of themselves flowers, leaves, and fruits of excellent quality, while man produces of himself vermin in thousands. The plants and trees produce of themselves oil, wine, and balsam, and yield of themselves a most sweet fragrance; while man brings forth of himself a thousand uncleannesses and an abominable stench, nauseous to think of, still more to mention. To sum up, such as is the tree, such is the fruit, since a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit."

Certainly it is with good reason and much propriety that the saints compare man's body to a dunghill covered with snow, on the outside looking soft and fair, and within full of all manner of uncleanness and filth. The blessed St. Bernard says: "If you set yourself to consider what you bring out by the eyes, ears, mouth, and nostrils, and the

other outlets of the body, there is no dunghill so filthy, or that brings forth of itself such things." Oh, how well did holy Job say: "What is man but a little dust, and a breeding-ground of worms!" *To rottenness [podre] I said, Thou art my father [padre]*. The likeness that there is between *podre* and *padre* is much greater between us and rottenness. *And to worms I said, Ye are my mother and my sisters* (Job xvii. 14). What, then, have we to be proud of? *Why is earth and ashes proud?* (Ecclus. x. 9). Of this origin at least we have nothing to be proud of, but plenty to humble us and hold us of little account. And so St. Gregory says: "The guardian of humility is the remembrance of our own filthiness." It is well kept under cover of these ashes.

Let us pass on, and deliver another blow with the pickax. See what you were before God created you, and you will find that you were nothing and that you were quite unable to emerge from that darkness of nonentity; only God of His goodness and mercy drew you out of that profound abyss and placed you in the number of His creatures, giving you the true and real being that you possess. Thus, so far as rests with ourselves, we are nothing; so we ought to equate ourselves on our part to the things that are not, and attribute to God the advantage that we have over them. *If any man thinketh himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself*. So St. Paul says (Gal. vi. 3). Here is a great mine opened to us, whence to enrich ourselves with humility.

And even further on this point, even after we are created and have received being, we do not uphold ourselves of ourselves. It is not as when the workman has done his work with the house; he leaves it after he has built it, and it upholds itself without need of any workman to do that. It is not so with us; after we are created, we have as much need of God every moment of our life, not to lose the being that we have got, as we had, when we were nothing, to

attain to being. He is ever sustaining and holding us up by His powerful hand, not to let us fall back into the deep pit of nothingness out of which He originally drew us. So David says: *Thou, O Lord, hath made me and put thy hand over me* (Psalm cxxxviii. 5). This hand of Thine, which Thou holdest over me, O Lord, keeps me afoot and preserves me from going back and returning to the nothingness in which I was before. We are always so tied to and dependent on this support of God that, if that failed us and He let us slip from His hand one single instant, in that same point of time we should swoon away and cease to be, as light vanishes from the earth when the sun is hidden. Therefore Holy Scripture says: *All nations are before God as if they were not, and as nothingness and emptiness are they counted before Him* (Isaias xl. 17). This is what we all keep saying at every step, that we are nothing; but I believe that we say it only with the lips without understanding what we say. Oh, if we did understand it and felt it as the prophet understood and felt it, when he said: *I am, O Lord, as nothing before thee* (Psalm xxxviii. 6). Truly I am nothing of myself; and the being that I have, I have it not but of Thee, O Lord: Thou gavest me it, and to Thee I have to attribute it, and I have nothing to glory in or be vain over on that score, because I had no hand in it. It is Thou that wert ever preserving this being and keeping it afoot, ever giving me the strength to act. All that being, all that power, all that strength to act, had to come to us of Thy hand, for we of our part have no power or strength for anything, since we are nothing. What, then, have we that we can possibly be proud of? Is it of our nothingness? Just now we were saying: What hast thou to be proud of, dust and ashes? Now we may say: What hast thou to be proud of, being nothing, which is something less than dust and ashes? What reason or what occasion has nothingness to deck itself out, and grow to pride, and take itself to be something? None, certainly.

CHAPTER VII

Of Another Main Motive for a Man to Know Himself and Gain Humility, Which Is the Consideration of His Sins

LET us go on and dig deeper still in the knowledge of ourselves: let us give another stroke of the pickax. But what further ground is there to dig? What is deeper than nothingness? Yes, there is something a good deal deeper. What is that? The sin that you have added to your nothingness. Oh, what a deep thing is that! Much deeper it is than nothingness, since sin is worse than not being at all, and it were better not to have been than to have sinned. So Christ our Redeemer said of Judas, who was to sell Him: *It were better for him if he had never been born* (Matt. xxvi. 24). There is no position so low, so cut off and estranged from goodness, as man in mortal sin, disinherited of heaven, enemy of God, sentenced to hell for ever and for ever. And although now, by the goodness of the Lord, you have no mortal sin on your conscience, yet we ought to remember the time when we were in sin, just as, to know our nothingness, we called to mind the time when we had no being. See in what a wretched state you were when before the eyes of God you were foul, displeasing, and His enemy, a child of wrath, bound over to everlasting fires; and so depreciate yourself and abase yourself to the lowest degree that you can. There is plenty of room for it. You may very well believe that, however much you put down and humble yourself, you cannot go too low, nor fathom the abyss of discredit which he deserves who has offended the infinite good, which is God. There is no touching bottom in this business; it is a profound and infinite abyss, for till we see in heaven how good God is, we cannot entirely know how evil sin is as being against God, and the evil he deserves who commits it.

Oh, if we could go on with this consideration and dig and go deep in this mine of our sins and miseries, how humble should we be! How little esteem should we have of ourselves, and how well should we take being put down and discredited! When a man has been a traitor to God, what measure of disparagement will he not embrace for love of Him! When a man has bartered away God for a fancy and appetite of his own and the gratification of a moment; when he has offended his Creator and Lord, and deserved to be in hell for ever and ever, what insults, what injuries, what affronts will he not take in good part, in compensation and satisfaction for the offenses which he has committed against the majesty of God! The Prophet David said: *Before the scourge came wherewith God afflicteth and humbleth me, I offended Him* (Psalm cxviii. 67); and for that I was silent and durst not complain, because all is much less than it should have been, to be in proportion to my faults. Thou hast chastised me, O Lord, as I deserved, for all that we can suffer in this life is as nothing in comparison with what one mortal sin that we have committed deserves. Think you not that he deserves to be dishonored and despised who has dishonored and despised God? Think you not that it is reasonable that he be held in little regard who has held God in little regard? Think you not that the will which has dared to offend its Creator deserves that henceforth never shall anything come off of what it purposes and wishes, in punishment of so great audacity on its part?

Herein is another particular to be observed, that, though we may trust in the mercy of God that He has now pardoned our sins, yet after all we have no certainty thereof. Man knows not, says the Wise Man, whether God loves or abhors him. *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred* (Eccles. ix. 1). *I am not conscious to myself of anything, yet I am not thereby justified*, said St. Paul (I Cor. iv. 4). Woe is me if I am not justified; little, then, will it profit me that I am a religious and have converted oth-

ers. *Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, says the Apostle, though I have the gift of prophecy, and know all sciences; though I give all my goods to the poor, and have converted the whole world, if I have not charity, I am nothing and it profiteth me nothing* (I Cor. xiii. 1-3). Woe to you if you have not charity and the grace of God; you are nothing, and less than nothing. This is a great motive for walking in humility, and always thinking meanly of oneself, and making small account of oneself, not to know whether one is in grace or whether one is in sin. If I know for certain that I have offended God and do not know for certain whether I am forgiven, who will dare to raise his head? Who will not, in this thought, go about in confusion and humble himself beneath the earth?

St. Gregory says that God has hidden His grace from us that we might make sure of one grace, namely, humility—*ut unam gratiam certam habeamus, humilitatem*. And though it seems painful, this fear and uncertainty that God has left us in, not knowing for certain whether we be in His grace or not, yet this has proved a blessing and mercy of His in so far as it is helpful to us for attaining humility, preserving the same, and not despising anyone however many sins he has committed. Oh, the possibility that So-and-So, though he has committed more sins than I have, may be now forgiven and in the grace of God, whereas I do not know if I am! This consideration serves us as a spur not to be negligent, but always to walk in fear and humility before God, craving His pardon and mercy, as the Wise Man advises us: *Blessed is the man who is ever in fear* (Prov. xxviii. 14): *Of sin forgiven be not without fear* (Ecclus. v. 5). A very efficacious consideration, this of our sins, to keep us within bounds and make us ever walk in humility and bowed down to earth; and there is much room to dig and go deep therein.

Further, if we set ourselves to consider the effects and losses caused in us by original sin, we shall find copious

and abundant material to humble us and keep us within small compass. Our nature is so depraved by sin that, as a stone by its weight is inclined to go down to the ground, so we by the corruption of original sin have a most lively inclination to the things of our flesh, our honor and temporal profit; we are quite alive to earthly things that affect us and very dead to the taste of heavenly and spiritual things; that element rules in us which ought to obey, and that obeys which ought to rule; and, finally, we are so miserable that under the human body erect and straight we carry hidden appetites of beasts and hearts bowed down to earth. *Wicked is the heart of all men and unsearchable: who shall know it?* (Jerem. xvii. 9). Who can know the malice of the human heart? The more you dig in this wall, the more abominations will be brought to light, as was shown in figure to Ezekiel (viii. 8).

Then if we set ourselves to consider our present faults, we shall find ourselves full of them; for this is what we have of our own creation. How ready we are with our tongue, how careless in the custody of our thought, how inconstant in our good resolutions, what lovers of our own interest and ease, how keen to gratify our appetites, how full of self-love, self-will, and our own judgment, how lively our passions still are, how untamed our evil inclinations, and how easily we let ourselves be carried away by them!

St. Gregory says very well on those words of Job: *Against a leaf that is carried away by the wind Thou showest Thy power* (Job xiii. 25), that there is much reason for comparing man to the leaf of a tree; for, as that waves and turns with every wind, so does man put about and change under the wind of passions and temptations. Now it is anger that excites him, now foolish mirth, now the passion of avarice and ambition carries him away, now that of lust, now pride lifts him up, now inordinate fear overwhelms and bears him down. So Isaias says: *We are all fallen like leaves, and our iniquities like a wind have car-*

ried us away (Isaias lxiv. 6). As the leaves of trees are buffeted and fall before the winds, so we are buffeted and overthrown by temptations; we have no stability, no firmness in virtue nor in our good resolutions. We do well to be confounded and humble ourselves, not only for our evils and sins, but even considering the works that seem to us quite good. If we consider and examine them well, we shall find abundant occasion and matter to humble ourselves for the faults and imperfections that are commonly mingled with them, according to the saying of the same prophet: *We have come to be all unclean as lepers; and as a rag stained with loathsome blood, so are all our good works* (Isaias lxiv. 6), if we consider the imperfections that are usually found in them, of which we have spoken elsewhere, and need not enlarge on it now.

CHAPTER VIII

How We Should So Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge as Not to Be Discouraged or Lose Confidence

SO great is our misery, and we have so much cause to humble ourselves and such experience of ourselves, that it would seem we need rather to be encouraged and braced up against discouragement and downheartedness at sight of our so many faults and imperfections, than exhorted to acknowledgment of the same. And so it is in truth to this extent that saints and masters of spiritual life teach us, when we dig and go deep down in knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, not to do it in such a way as to stop at that—for fear lest the soul should lose confidence and fall into despair at the sight of so great misery and such inconstancy in good resolutions—but to pass on to the recognition of the goodness of God, and place in Him our entire confidence. Thus St. Paul says that our sadness for having sinned should not go the length of inducing tor-

por and despair, *lest such a one be swallowed up in excess of sadness* (II Cor. ii. 7), but should be a sadness tempered and mingled with hope of pardon, fixing one's eyes on the mercy of God, and not stopping short at the mere consideration of sin and its foulness and gravity. They say in like manner that we must not stop short at the recognition of our miseries and weaknesses, lest we lose heart and despond; but this must be the end of our digging and going deep down in knowledge of ourselves, to see that on our side we have no support nor anything to stand upon, and forthwith cast our eyes on God and trust in Him. In this way not only shall we not be discouraged, but rather encouraged and strengthened; for what serves to breed discouragement when you regard yourself, serves to breed vigor and encouragement when you look up to God. And the better you know your own weakness, and the more you distrust yourself, looking to God, steadying yourself in Him, and putting in Him all your confidence, the stronger you will be and the more robust and better prepared to encounter all that comes.

At the same time the saints observe a thing of great importance, that, while we ought not to stop upon the study of our own miseries and weaknesses to such a degree as to lose confidence and fall into despair, but we must pass on to the consideration of the goodness, mercy, and liberality of God, and put our whole confidence in that; so neither on the other hand should we stop there, but turn at once our eyes back upon ourselves and on our own weakness and misery. For if we stop on the knowledge of the goodness, mercy, and liberality of God, and forget what we are of ourselves, there is therein great danger of our falling into presumption and pride, because we should come to an unmeasured sense of security in ourselves and go our way in too great confidence, without the necessary reserve and fear. That is a great pitfall, the root and beginning of great and fearful lapses. Oh, how many spiritual persons,

who seemed to be soaring aloft to heaven in the practice of prayer and contemplation, have fallen into this pitfall! Oh, how many who were truly saints, and great saints, have come hereby to miserable falls! All because they forgot themselves, all because they settled down into an excessive security on the strength of the favors they received from God. They were full of self-confidence, as though for them there was no danger; so they came to fall miserably. Our books are full of examples of this sort.

St. Basil says that the cause of that miserable fall of King David into adultery and murder was a piece of presumption that he once had when he was visited by God with great abundance of consolation, and dared this speech: *I said in my excess, I shall never be upset* (Psalm xxix. 7). But wait a little: God will just in some small measure withdraw His hand; these extraordinary favors and consolations will cease; and you will see what happens: *Thou hast turned Thy face away from me, and I am troubled* (ibid.) God will leave you in your poverty, and you will make an exhibition of yourself and come to know to your sorrow, after a fall, what you would not know while you were being favored and visited by God. And the cause of the fall and denial of the Apostle St. Peter, St. Basil also says, was his having presumed and confided vainly in himself. *Though I should have to die with Thee, I would not deny Thee: though all be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized* (Matt. xxvi. 33, 35). For this arrogance and presumption God allowed him to fall, that he might humble himself and know himself better. We should never take our eyes off ourselves, nor hold ourselves secure in this life, but look at what we are and walk always in great fear of ourselves and with great caution and care, lest the enemy that we have within us should practise some treason upon us and trip us up to a fall.

Thus we should neither stop short on the knowledge of our miseries and weaknesses, but pass on straight to the

knowledge of the goodness of God; nor stop short either on the knowledge of God and His mercies and favors, but straight turn our eyes down upon ourselves. This is the Jacob's ladder, one end resting on the earth of self-knowledge, and the other reaching to the height of heaven. By this you must go up and down, as the angels went up and down by that. Mount up to the knowledge of the goodness of God, and stop not there, lest you come to presumption, but go back again down to the knowledge of yourself; and stay not there, not to lose heart and confidence, but mount up once more to the knowledge of God, to have confidence in Him: it must all be going up and down by this ladder.

In this way St. Catharine of Siena practised this exercise to rid herself of various temptations wherewith the devil assailed her, as she herself relates in her Dialogues. When the devil tempted her to put her to confusion, trying to make her think that her whole life had been a delusion, then she raised and lifted herself up in the mercy of God, with humility saying: "I confess to my Creator and Lord that all my life has been darkness; but I will hide myself in the wounds of Jesus Christ crucified; I will bathe myself in His blood and so will efface my evil deeds; and I will rejoice in my Creator and Lord. *Thou wilt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow* (Psalm l. 9)." And when the devil, by a contrary temptation, tried to puff her up with pride, saying: "Thou art perfect, and there is no need for thee to afflict thyself any more, nor bewail thy defects," then she at once humbled herself, and thus answered the Evil One: "Unhappy creature that I am! St. John Baptist had never sinned, and was sanctified in his mother's womb, and he nevertheless failed not to do severe penance; what, then, must I do, who have committed so many defects and never acknowledged or bewailed them as I ought?" The devil then, enraged to see so much humility on the one hand and so much confidence in God on the other, cried out: "Cursed be thou and whoever put thee up to this! I know

not what way to get at thee! If I cast thee down to make thee lose courage, thou liftest thyself on high on the mercy of God; and if I puff thee up, thou castest thyself down by humility, even to the bottom of hell, and within that very hell thou dost pursue me." After this he let her alone, seeing he came off with heavy loss from all assaults he made on her. In this way, then, we must practise this exercise, on the one side full of fear and caution, and on the other vigorous and cheerful; fearful of ourselves, and vigorous and joyful in God. These are the two lessons that holy man [A Kempis] says that God daily teaches His elect—on the one hand to see their own defects and on the other to see the goodness of God, Who so lovingly rids them of them.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Good Things and Great Advantages That There Are in the Exercise of Self-Knowledge

TO encourage us more in this exercise of self-knowledge, we will go on to mention some of the great inducements to it and advantages that there are in it. We have already mentioned one very principal inducement, that it is the foundation and root of humility and a necessary means to get it and keep it. Someone asked one of those ancient Fathers how he might obtain true humility, and he answered: "By keeping your eyes off other people's faults and fixing them on your own." By digging down and going deep in self-knowledge you will attain to true humility. That is enough to make us attend much to this exercise, seeing that it is worth so much to us for the gaining of the virtue of humility.

But the saints go further, and say that humble knowledge of oneself is the surest way of knowing God, which is the profoundest of all sciences. This is the reason given

by St. Bernard. Self-knowledge is deeper and more profitable than other sciences, because thereby man comes to the knowledge of God. This is what St. Bonaventure says we are given to understand by that miracle in the Gospel, which Christ our Redeemer worked on the man blind from his birth, putting clay on his eyes, and so giving him bodily sight, thereby to see himself, and also spiritual sight, to know God and adore Him. Thus to us, who are born blind, ignorant of God and of ourselves, God gives sight by putting before our eyes the clay of which we are formed, that, recognizing ourselves to be but a little clay, we may receive the sight of what we are, and know in the first place ourselves and thence come to know God.

The same is the aim of our holy Mother the Church in the ceremony which she practises at the beginning of Lent of putting ashes above our eyes: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return;" that man, knowing himself, may come to know God and be sorry for having offended Him and do penance for his sins. Thus man's seeing himself and knowing himself, is a means to arrive at the knowledge of God; and the better he knows his lowliness, the better will he know and come to see the grandeur and exalted majesty of God. Contrary put next to contrary, and one extreme put in front of another extreme, brings the other out. *Opposita iuxta se posita magis elucent*. White put on black shines out and is much more conspicuous. Now man is the extreme of lowness, and God the extreme of height. These are two contrary extremes; hence it is that the better a man knows himself, seeing that of himself he has no good, but only nothingness and sins, the better he will see the goodness and mercy and liberality of God, stooping to love and deal with such great abjection as ours.

Hence the soul comes to be greatly enkindled and inflamed with the love of God, never ceasing to wonder and

give thanks to God that, miserable and evil as man is, God endures him and does him so many favors, whereas often we cannot endure ourselves. And so great is the goodness and mercy of God towards us, that He not only endures us, but says: *My delights are to be with the children of men* (Prov. viii. 31). What hast Thou found, O Lord, in the children of men, that thou sayest that Thy delights are to be and converse with them?

Therefore did the saints make such use of this exercise of self-knowledge, to come to a better knowledge of God and greater love of His Divine Majesty. That was the exercise and prayer that St. Augustine used: "My God, Who art ever being and never changest, may I know myself and know Thee." This is the prayer in which the humble St. Francis spent days and nights: "Who art Thou, and who am I!" Thereby these saints arrived at a very high knowledge of God. This is a way very safe and sure to this end. The deeper you abase yourself and sink down in self-knowledge, the higher you will mount and grow in knowledge of God and of His goodness and infinite mercy. And again, the higher you mount up and grow in the knowledge of God, the more you will abase yourself and increase in knowledge of yourself. This heavenly light lights up corners and makes the soul ashamed even of what in the world's eyes seems on the contrary very good. St. Bonaventure says: "As when the rays of the sun come into a room, the motes at once appear; so the soul, lit up with the knowledge of God by the rays of that true Sun of Justice, sees at once in herself the tiniest things, and comes to take for evil and defective what a man with less light takes for good."

This is the reason why the saints are so humble and make so little of themselves, because they have more light and a better knowledge of God and therefore also of themselves. They see that of their own stock they have nothing but nothingness and sins. And much as they know themselves,

and many as are the faults that they see in themselves, they always believe that there are many more which they do not see; they believe that what they do know is the lesser part of their bad points and estimate themselves accordingly, believing that, as God is more good than they know, so they themselves are more evil than comes within the compass of their knowledge. Much as we know and understand of God, we can never comprehend Him; there is always more in Him to know and understand. So, however much we know of ourselves, we cannot fathom nor touch the bottom of our own misery. This is no exaggeration, but plain truth; for as man has of his own yield nothing but nothingness and sins, who can humble and abase himself as much as these two titles deserve?

We read of a holy woman that she begged of God light to know herself, and saw in herself such foulness and misery that she could not endure it, and besought God once more: "Lord, not so much, else I shall lose heart." Father Master Avila says that he knew a person who oftentimes asked God to discover to him what he might be. God opened his eyes ever so little—and the sight might have cost him dear; he saw himself so foul and abominable that he cried out aloud: "Lord, in Thy mercy take away this mirror from before my eyes; I have no mind to see more of my own figure."

Hence there arises in the servants of God that holy hatred and abhorrence of themselves of which we have spoken above; for the more they know the immense goodness of God and the more they love it, so much the more do they abhor themselves as being contrary to and an enemy of God, according to that saying of Job (vii. 20): *Why hast Thou set me contrary to Thee, and I am become grievous to myself?* They see that in themselves they have the root of all evils, which is our self-will and the evil and perverse inclination of our flesh, from which proceed all sins, and with this knowledge they rise up against them-

selves and abhor themselves. Does it not seem to you reasonable to abhor him who has made you give up and barter away so great a good as God to take a little gratification and satisfaction? Does it not seem to you reasonable to bear enmity against him who has made you lose everlasting glory and deserve hell for ever and ever? Does it not seem reasonable to abhor him who has caused you such a disaster, and even still tries to bring it on you? Now that is what you are, the opponent and enemy of God, and enemy and opponent of your own good and your own salvation.

CHAPTER X

That Self-Knowledge Does Not Bring Discouragement, but Rather Courage and Strength

THERE is another very good thing in this exercise of self-knowledge, that not only it does not cause discouragement and cowardice, as one might perhaps expect, but on the contrary great courage and strength for all good work. The reason is that, when a man knows himself, he sees that he has nothing in himself to rest on, and accordingly has no confidence in himself and puts all his confidence in God, in Whom he finds himself strong and capable of anything. Such folk accordingly it is that are able to undertake great things and meet great emergencies and carry great affairs through; for, since they attribute all to God and nothing to themselves, God intervenes and makes the business His own and charges Himself with it. Then it is that He is ready to do wonders and achieve great results through feeble means and instruments, to *show forth the riches of his glory in vessels of mercy, who are his elect* (Rom. ix. 23). To show forth the riches and treasures of His mercies, God seeks for weak and caitiff instruments to do great things. It is in the vessels of greater weakness that He is

wont to store the treasures of His strength, that in this way His glory may better shine forth.

This is what God Himself said to St. Paul when, fatigued with his temptations, the Apostle cried out to be delivered from them. God answered: My grace is sufficient for thee, however many the temptations and weaknesses that thou feelest, since it is then that the power of God shows itself more perfect and more strong, when infirmity and weakness is greater (II Cor. xii. 9). As the physician gains greater honor, the more grievous and dangerous the sickness, so the greater the weakness in us, the greater honor is won for the arm of God. So St. Augustine and St. Ambrose explain this passage. Thus it comes to pass that, when a man knows himself and distrusts himself and puts his whole trust in God, then His Divine Majesty stands by and aids him; and on the contrary when one goes to work confiding in his methods and precautions, then he is forsaken and left forlorn. This, says St. Basil, is the reason why often on occasion of some high feasts, when we desired and expected to make a better meditation and feel more devotion, we feel less, because we were confident in our own methods and our own appliances and preparations; and at other times, when we least thought of it, we are flooded unexpectedly with great blessings of sweetness, that we may understand that this is a grace and mercy of the Lord and not any diligence or merit of our own.

Thus, then, the knowledge that a man has of his own weakness and misery does not discourage or make a coward of him, but animates and strengthens him the more. It is this that the Apostle says: *When I am weak*, that is, when I humble myself, *then I am strengthened* (II Cor. xii. 10). When I humble and abase myself and know that I can do nothing and am worth nothing, then I am strengthened and lifted up; so St. Augustine and St. Ambrose explain the passage. The more I know and see my infirmity and weakness, fixing my eyes on God, the stronger I find

myself and more robust for every effort, God being my whole confidence and strength. *And the Lord shall be his trust* (Jerem. xvii. 7).

Hence it will be understood that it is not humility, nor do they spring from humility, those fits of discouragement and low spirits that sometimes come over us about our spiritual progress, when we think that we shall never be able to attain virtue or overcome the evil nature and inclination which besets us; or on other occasions, concerning the offices and ministries that obedience puts or might put upon us, saying to ourselves: "Have I the capacity to hear confessions? Have I the capacity to go on missions, or for other like things?" This looks like humility, but often it is not; rather it springs from pride, a man fixing his eyes on himself, as though it was by his own abilities, contrivances, and diligence that he was to be able to do anything, whereas he ought to fix them on God, in Whom we should find strength and encouragement. *The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life: of whom shall I be afraid? If an army rise up against me, my heart shall not fear: if in battle array they stand out against me, in God will I hope. Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, and go down to the very gates of hell, my heart shall not fear, since thou, O Lord, art with me* (Psalm xxii. 4; xxvi. 1-3). In how many different words does the holy prophet say the same thing! The Psalms are full of it, to show the abundance of affection and confidence that the psalmist had, and we ought to have, in God. *In my God I will climb over the wall* (Psalm xvii. 34); how high soever it be, it shall be no obstacle in my way. He will overcome giants like locusts. In my God I will trample upon lions and dragons; with the grace and favor of the Lord we will be strong. *God hath trained my hands for battle. Thou, O Lord, hast given my arms the strength of a bow of steel* (Psalm xvii. 35).

CHAPTER XI

Of Other Great Goods and Advantages That There Are in Self-Knowledge

ONE of the chief means that we can apply on our side for the Lord to do us favors and impart to us great gifts and virtues, is to humble ourselves and know our weakness and misery. So said the Apostle St. Paul: *Willingly will I glory in my weaknesses, infirmities and miseries, that so the power of Christ may dwell in me* (II Cor. xii. 9). And so St. Ambrose upon those words: *I rejoice and glory in my infirmities* (II Cor. xii. 10), says: "If the Christian is to glory, he should glory in his lowliness and poverty, because that is the way to grow and be strong before God." St. Augustine applies to this purpose the saying of the prophet: *Lord, thou wilt give thine inheritance rain with goodwill: it was weak, and thou hast set it up* (Psalm lxxvii. 10). When think you that God will give to His inheritance, that is, to the soul, rain with good will, a gracious rain of gifts and graces? When the soul knows her infirmity and misery, then the Lord will set her up, and then shall fall upon her with good will the gracious stream of His gifts. As amongst us the more our poor mendicants discover their poverty and sores to rich and pitiful men, the more they move them to pity and the greater alms they receive at their hands; so the more a man humbles himself and knows himself, and the more he discovers and confides his misery to God, the more does he invite and incline the mercy of God to have compassion and pity on him and to impart to him with greater abundance the gifts of His grace. For it is God *who giveth strength to the weary, and maketh strong and robust them that seem to be undone* (Isaias xi. 29).

To say in short the benefits and advantages of this exercise, I say that self-knowledge is a universal remedy for

all things. Thus in the questions that are put in spiritual conferences that we are wont to hold as to what is the origin of such and such a defect, and what is the remedy for it, in almost all such cases we may answer that the origin of the defect is lack of self-knowledge, and the remedy would be to know and humble oneself. For if you ask whence comes my habit of making rash judgments of my brethren, I say it is from want of self-knowledge; for if you entered into yourself, you would find so much reason to have an eye to and bewail your own disorders that you would take no account of those of others. If you ask whence comes my addressing my brothers in harsh and offensive words, that also comes of lack of self-knowledge; for if you knew yourself, you would take yourself for the least of all and look upon everyone else as your superior, and so you would not dare to address them in that manner. If you ask me whence come excuses, complaints, and murmurings, "Why don't they give me this or that?" or "Why do they treat me in this manner?" it is clear that they arise from the same cause. If you ask how comes it that a man is upset and saddened beyond measure when he is troubled with such and such temptations, or grows melancholy and loses heart when he sees that he falls many times into certain faults, once more that comes of want of self-knowledge; for if you had humility, and well considered the evil of your heart, you would not be troubled or discouraged, but would wonder that worse things did not befall you and you did not fall into greater faults, and you would go about praising and giving thanks to God that He holds you by His hand, not to let you fall into the sins that you would fall into if He did not keep hold of you. What may not come out of a cesspool and running sewer of vices? Such evil odors as these are to be expected from such a dunghill; and from such a tree, such fruit. On these words of the prophet, *He remembereth that we are dust* (Psalm cii. 14), St. Anselm observes: "Is it much that the wind

rising raises the dust?" If you require aid to be very charitable towards your brethren, very obedient, very patient, very penitent, here you will find the aid wanted for all.

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read that one day in traveling he met a nobleman of those realms, a friend of his, who seeing his poverty and the inconvenience that he suffered on the way, condoled with him and begged him to take more thought of his personal comfort. The father said to him with apparent cheerfulness, much dissembling the real state of the case: "Let not your lordship be troubled, nor think that I am so badly off as I look, since I would have you know that I always send before me a courier, who has my lodging ready and supplied with every requisite." The nobleman asked: "Who is this courier?" He replied: "It is my knowledge of myself and the consideration of what I deserve, which is hell for my sins; and when with this knowledge I come to any lodging, however inconvenient and ill-prepared it be, I always think that I am made more comfortable than I deserve."

In the chronicles of the Order of Preachers it is told of blessed St. Margaret of the same order that a religious, a great servant of God and a very spiritual person, on one occasion in conversation with her said to her among other things that he had entreated God many times in prayer to show him the way by which those ancient Fathers had traveled to please God and receive so many favors as they did receive at His hand; and how one night when he was asleep there was put before him a book written in letters of gold, and thereupon a voice awoke him which said: "Arise and read;" whereupon he had risen and read these words, few, but heavenly and divine: "This was the perfection of the ancient Fathers, to love God, to despise themselves, to despise no one, to judge no one." And forthwith the book disappeared.

CHAPTER XII

How Much It Behooves Us to Exercise Ourselves in Self-Knowledge

THALES of Miletus, one of the Seven Wise Men of Greece, being asked what of all the things in nature it was most difficult to know, answered that the most difficult thing was for man to know himself, because our self-love is so great as to bar and hinder this knowledge. Hence that saying, celebrated among the ancients, "Know thyself"—*Nosce teipsum*; and again, "Live by thyself"—*Tecum habita*. But to leave external authorities and come to our own, who are better masters of this science, St. Augustine and St. Bernard say that this science of self-knowledge is the highest and most profitable of all that man has invented and discovered. Men greatly esteem, says St. Augustine, the knowledge of the things of heaven and earth, astronomy, cosmography, the study of the movements of the heavens, the courses of the planets, their properties and influences; but the knowledge of oneself is the highest science and most profitable of all. Other sciences puff up and make people vain, as St. Paul says (I Cor. viii. 1), but this edifies and humbles. So the saints and all masters of spirit insist much on our occupying ourselves at prayer in this exercise; and blame the delusion of those who pass lightly over the knowledge of their own defects, and occupy themselves in other devout thoughts more to their taste, finding no relish in the consideration of their own defects and faults and not liking to present such an ill appearance to themselves, just as an ugly man dares not look at himself in the looking-glass. The glorious St. Bernard says, speaking in the person of God: "O man, if thou wouldst look at thyself and know thyself, thou wouldst be displeasing and disagreeable to thyself, and pleasing and agreeable to Me; but now since thou dost not see nor know thyself, thou art

pleasing to thyself and displeasing to Me. A time will come when thou wilt please neither Me nor thyself; not Me, because thou has sinned; not thyself, because thou wilt burn forever"—*O homo, si te videres, tibi displiceret et mihi placeret. Sed quia te non vides, tibi places et mihi displices. Veniet tempus cum nec mihi nec tibi placebis; mihi, quia peccasti, tibi, quia in aeternum ardebis.*

St. Gregory on this subject says: There are some who, when they begin to serve God and aim a little at virtue, fancy at once that they are good and holy people; so they fix their eyes on their good points in utter forgetfulness of their sins and evil deeds in the past, and sometimes also in the present. Taken up in regarding what is good in them, they disregard and fail to see the many evil deeds that they do. But the good and the elect do just the opposite. While they are really full of virtues and good works, they constantly fix their eyes on the evil that besets them, regarding and considering their faults and imperfections. Now it is readily seen what becomes of the one and the other; since in this way it comes about that those who look at their bad points, preserve their good points and their great virtues, dwelling ever in humility, while on the other hand evil men lose their good points by looking at them, becoming proud and vain of them. Thus the good help themselves by their weak points and make profit out of them; while evil men take harm from the very good that is in them, making bad use of it. So it happens in our daily experience in regard to food, that, though it be good and wholesome, it will make one ill who eats without order and without rule; and, contrariwise, the poison of the viper, taken with a certain measure and moderation, will be a healthful remedy [*triaca*, O. E. *triacal*, our *treacle*, from the Greek *θηριακή* from *θηρίον*, a beast.] And when the devil brings to your memory the good deeds you have done, to make you think highly of yourself and be proud, set over against them your evil deeds, remembering your past sins, as did

the Apostle St. Paul. Not to be puffed up and grow vain over his great virtues, and his having been rapt to the third heaven and the greatness of the revelations that he had heard, he says: *I who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor of the servants of God and of the name of Christ! Ah, I am not worthy of the name of Apostle, since I have persecuted the Church of God* (I Tim. i. 3; I Cor. xv. 9). This is an excellent counterpoise and very good counter-mine against this temptation.

On those words that the Archangel St. Gabriel said to the Prophet Daniel: *Son of man, understand what I wish to say to thee* (Dan. viii. 17), St. Jerome says: "Those holy prophets, Daniel, Ezechiel, and Zachary, with the high and continual revelations that they had, seemed to be already enrolled among the choirs of angels; but that they might not exalt themselves therein above their station and become proud and vain, taking themselves now for beings of an angelic superior nature, the angel warned them on the part of God to remember the frailty and weakness of their natural condition, calling them *sons of men*." Thus they were to recognize that they were weak and miserable men like the rest, and so humble themselves and take themselves for what they were indeed. And we have many examples in ecclesiastical and secular history of saints and illustrious men, kings, emperors, and pontiffs, who practised this method, keeping an attendant to remind them at times that they were but men, that so they might dwell in humility and escape being vain.

It is told of our Father Francis Borgia that while he was Duke of Gandia a holy man counseled him, if he wished to advance greatly in the service of God, not to let any day pass without thinking for some time of something that might make for his shame and self-abasement. He took the advice so much to heart that, from the time that he gave himself to the practice of mental prayer, he spent daily the two first hours of his prayer in this knowledge and

depreciation of himself; and all that he heard or read or saw served him to this purpose of self-humiliation and confusion. And besides he had another devotion that helped him very much. Every morning that he rose, the first thing he did was to kneel down and kiss the ground three times, to remember that he was earth and dust, and to that must return. The good that he drew down from this practice is apparent in the great example of humility and holiness that he has left us.

Let us, then, follow this counsel; let no day pass without our spending some portion of our meditation in thinking of something that may turn to our shame and confusion. And let us not stop or grow weary of this exercise until we feel that we have drunk into our very soul a hearty depreciation and disparagement of ourselves, and confusion and shame before the majesty of God at sight of our baseness and misery. We have great need of this, inasmuch as our pride is so great and the inclination we have to be regarded and made much of so strong, that, if we do not go on continually with this practice, every hour we shall find ourselves lifted up above ourselves like a cork on water, since we are puffer and lighter than any cork. We must always go on repressing and putting down this swelling of pride in ourselves, by looking at our feet, at our foul and lowly condition, for thus is drowned all the noise of vanity and pride. Let us remember that parable of the fig tree in the Gospel, how the master wished to cut it down because for three years it had borne no fruit, and the gardener said: "Sir, leave it alone for this year at least, till I dig and spread dung about it; and if then it bear not fruit, thou shalt cut it down." Do you, then, dig round about this dry and barren fig tree of your soul and spread about it the dung of your sins and miseries, since there is plenty of that, and therewith it will bear fruit and become fertile.

To animate us more to this exercise, and that none may take occasion to abandon it on any false apprehensions,

two things are to be observed. First, let no one think that this exercise is only for beginners; it is also for ancient and advanced and very perfect men, since we see that they practised it, and even the Apostle St. Paul practised it. Secondly, we must understand that this is no sad or melancholy exercise, nor a cause of trouble and uneasiness; rather it brings with it great peace and quiet, content and cheerfulness, how many soever be the faults and miseries that one knows in oneself, even though one clearly knows oneself to be so worthless as to deserve the abhorrence and contempt of all, because when this knowledge comes of true humility, the pain is accompanied by such sweetness and satisfaction that one would not wish to be without it.

Other pains and annoyances that people feel at seeing in themselves so many faults and imperfections are a temptation of the devil, whose aim it is on the one hand to make us think that we have got humility; and on the other hand, if he could, he would also wish to make us lose our trust in God and go jaded and discouraged in His service. If we had to stop short at the knowledge of our weakness and misery, we should find occasion enough to be sad and disconsolate; but we must not stop there, but pass on at once to the consideration of the goodness and mercy and liberality of God, and to the great love that He bears us, and all that He has suffered for us; and in that we must put all our confidence. And thus what might have been an occasion of discouragement and sadness when you looked at yourself, serves to strengthen and animate you, and becomes an occasion of greater joy and comfort, when you look at God. A man looks at himself and sees nothing but matter for weeping; but looking at God, he trusts in His goodness, without fear of seeing himself abandoned for all the many faults and imperfections and miseries that he sees in himself, because the goodness and mercy of God, on which he fixes his eyes and his heart, exceeds and surpasses infinitely all that. And with this consideration rooted in his innermost

being, he despairs of himself as of a broken reed, but has ever a firm hope and confidence in God, according to that saying of Daniel: *Not in confidence of our own righteous doings, do we prostrate and lay our prayers before Thy face, but in confidence of Thy many mercies* (Dan. ix. 18).

CHAPTER XIII

Of the Second Degree of Humility, Explaining in What It Consists

THE second degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is a desire to be held cheap by others—"love to be unknown and counted for nothing"—*ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*—a desire that others shall neither know you nor esteem you, nor make any account of you. If we were well grounded in the first degree of humility, we should have gone a long way towards gaining the second. If we really held ourselves cheap, we should make no great difficulty about others' likewise holding us cheap, rather we should be glad of it. Would you see that? says St. Bonaventure. We are all naturally glad when the rest of the world falls in with our opinion and feels as we do. Now if that is so, why are we not glad that others should hold us cheap? Do you know why? It is because we do not hold ourselves so; we are not of that way of thinking. On those words of Job: *I have sinned, and really offended, and have not received the punishment that I deserved* (Job xxxiii. 27), St. Gregory says: "Many they are that speak ill of themselves with their lips, saying that they are some thus, and some that, but they do not believe it, for if anyone tells them the same things, or even less, they cannot bear it." These people, when they speak ill of themselves, do not speak with sincerity. They do not think so in their heart, as Job thought when he spoke as above in the text. Job said this in all sincerity from his heart; but these people, says

St. Gregory, only humble themselves with their lips exteriorly, but in their heart they have no humility. They wish to appear humble, but have no mind to be so; for if they desired it in sincerity, they would not feel it so much when another rebuked them and admonished them of some fault; they would not excuse themselves, nor stand on their defense as they do, nor be troubled as they are troubled.

Cassian relates how there came a monk to the Abbot Serapion, who in his habit, demeanor, and words made great show of humility and self-contempt, and never came to an end of speaking ill of himself, how he was such a great sinner and so wicked as not to deserve this common air or the earth on which he trod. He would not sit down except on the ground, much less would he consent to their washing his feet. The Abbot Serapion after dinner began to speak of spiritual things, according to his custom, and the guest came in for his share. He gave him some good advice with great love and tenderness, telling him that since he was young and strong, he should contrive to live in his cell and work with his hands to gain his bread according to the rule of monks, and not go wondering idle round the cells of others. So much did that monk resent this admonition and advice that he could not dissemble his feelings, but showed them externally by the look he put on. Then the Abbot Serapion said to him: "How now, sonny, to this moment you have been telling us so many serious evil things of yourself, matter of much discredit and ignominy, and now on one gentle plain piece of advice like this, which contains in it nothing insulting, or any affront, but much love and charity, you have got indignant and changed countenance so that there is no mistaking your feelings. Were you waiting, perchance, upon these evil things that you said of yourself, to hear from our mouth: *The just is the first accuser of himself* (Prov. xviii. 17); that is why he speaks ill of himself? Did you want us to praise you, and take you for a just and good man?"

Ah, says St. Gregory, how often it is this that we are aiming at with our pieces of hypocrisy and pretended humility; we want to appear humble, which really is great pride. We humble ourselves to get praise. Otherwise, pray, why do you say of yourself what you do not want others to believe? If you say it from your heart and are acting honestly, you must want others to believe you and take you for what you say you are; if you do not want that, you show clearly that you have no mind for humiliations. The Wise Man says: *There are some who humble themselves in pretense, and there in the depths of their heart they are full of pride and deceit* (Ecclus. xix. 23). For what greater deceit can there be than to seek after the honor and esteem of men by means of humility? And what greater pride can there be than to aim at being made much of as a humble man? To seek praises for humility, says St. Bernard, is not the virtue of humility, but a perversion and undoing of the same. What greater perversion could there be than that! What could be more unreasonable than to wish to be thought better for putting on a worse appearance? From the evil that you say of yourself you wish to appear good and be regarded accordingly. What course could be more unworthy and more irrational! St. Ambrose in reprehension of this says: "Many have the appearance of humility, but have not the virtue of humility; many seek it in external appearance, but inwardly contradict it."

So great is our pride, and the inclination we have to be regarded and esteemed, that we seek out a thousand means and invent a thousand contrivances to this end. Directly sometimes, at other times indirectly, we are always trying to draw the water to our mill. St. Gregory says that it is the way of the proud, when they think that they have said or done anything well, to ask others who saw or heard them to tell them of their faults, that they may speak well of them. This asking to be told these faults has the look

of humility, but it is no humility at all; it is pride, because their only aim therein is to attract praise to themselves. At other times a man starts finding fault with what he has done, declaring himself much dissatisfied with it, hoping to draw his hearer thereby, and get him to excuse the performance, and say: "Really it was very well done, and you have no reason for dissatisfaction." A very grave and spiritual religious man used to call this sort of humility, "humility with a hook," for with this hook you are seeking to extract praise from your companion. A preacher has just come down from the pulpit, very well satisfied and pleased with his sermon; and asks a friend to tell him his faults. All this is a piece of pretense and hypocrisy. You do not think that there were any faults; your object is that they may speak well of the sermon and fall in with your idea of it; and that you listen to right willingly. But if it happens that your friend tells you plainly of some fault, you have no stomach for that; on the contrary you defend yourself; and sometimes it goes so far that you judge your candid friend to be wanting in understanding, and not to be one who should have any say in the matter—because he quarrels with what you take to be a foregone conclusion. All this is pride and love of reputation; that is what you want to extract from these pretended acts of humility. At other times, when we cannot cover up our fault, we acknowledge it plainly, that the honor which we lose by the fault, we may recover by this humble confession. At other times, says St. Bernard, we exaggerate our faults, and say even more than is true, that others seeing that it is neither possible nor credible that the thing should be so bad as that, may think that there cannot have been any fault in the matter at all, and may put it all down to our humility; thus by exaggerating and saying more than is true we think to cover up what is true. With a thousand artifices and intricacies we contrive to disguise and cover up our pride under the cloak of humility.

Herein by the way you will see, says St. Bernard, what an excellent and precious thing humility is, and how base and hideous is pride. See what a lofty and glorious thing humility is, since pride itself seeks to avail itself of it and cover itself therewith. And see what a base and shameful thing is pride, since it dares not walk abroad with face uncovered, but must go disguised and covered up under the cloak of humility. How angry and hurt you would be, if your neighbors understood that you were aiming and desiring to be esteemed and praised! They would take you for a proud man, which is the worst light in which you could be placed, and therefore you aim at covering up your pride under a show of humility. But why are you willing to be what you are ashamed to appear? If you would be ashamed and angry at others' understanding that you sought to be praised and made much of, why are you not ashamed of yourself for seeking it? The evil that there is therein lies in your seeking it, not in others' understanding that you seek it. And if you feel shame at men's understanding it, why do you not feel the same at God's understanding and seeing it? *Thine eyes, O Lord, have beheld mine imperfection* (Psalm cxxxviii. 16).

All this befalls us because we are not well grounded in the first degree of humility, and so are so far from the second. In this matter we must fall back upon first principles. The first thing required of us is a knowledge of our own misery and nothingness. From that profound self-knowledge there must arise in us a very low conceit of ourselves, a disparaging and making small account of ourselves; and that is the first degree of humility; thence we have to ascend to the second degree. Thus it is not enough that you make small account of yourself; it is not enough that you speak ill of yourself, even though you so speak sincerely and from your heart and really mean it; you must contrive to get so far as to rejoice at others' also thinking of you exactly what you think and say of yourself, and

their running you down and making small account of you. St. John Climacus says: He is not humble who disparages himself and speaks ill of himself, for who is there who will not take things well from himself? But he is humble who in peace and composure rejoices at being disparaged, and illtreated by others. It is good that a man should always speak ill of himself, saying that he is a proud fellow, lazy, impatient, negligent, and careless; but the better thing would be for him to keep those things back for others to say them. If you desire that others should think the same and hold you in that rank and under that figure, and you rejoice at hearing these things when occasion offers, that is true humility.

CHAPTER XIV

Of Some Degrees and Steps Whereby to Mount to the Perfection of This Second Degree of Humility

BECAUSE this second degree of humility belongs to the most practical and difficult part of the practice of this virtue, we will divide it as some saints divide it, and make of it four degrees or steps, that thus, little by little, and as it were counting our paces, we may mount to that perfection of humility which this degree requires. The first step is not to desire to be honored and esteemed by men, but rather fly from everything that points to honor and reputation. We have books full of examples of saints who were so far from desiring to be courted and esteemed by the world that they fled from honors and dignities and from all occasions that might bring upon them esteem in the eyes of men, looking upon it as a deadly enemy. Of this the first example is given us by Christ our Redeemer and Master, Who, understanding that they wanted to come and elect Him king for the miracle of the five loaves and two fishes (John vi. 15), fled away, not being Himself in any

danger from such high estate, but to give us an example. And, for the same reason, when He manifested the glory of His most holy body to the three disciples in His admirable Transfiguration, He bade them tell no one till after His death and glorious Resurrection (Mark vii. 36). And when He gave sight to the blind and worked other miracles, He charged them to keep it secret, all to give us an example to fly from the honor and esteem of men, for the great danger there is in it of vanity and ruin.

In the chronicles of the order of blessed St. Francis it is told how, when Brother Giles heard of the fall of Brother Elias—who had been Minister General and a great scholar, and was then an apostate and excommunicate because he had taken the side of the emperor, Frederick II, in rebellion against the Church—he, Brother Giles, threw himself on the ground on hearing of these things, and clutched it hard. Being asked why he did that, he answered: "I want to go down as low as I can, since he has fallen from mounting high." Gerson applies to this effect the fiction of poets about the giant Anteus, son of Earth, who, wrestling with Hercules, every time that he was thrown to earth recovered new strength, and so could not be overcome; but Hercules, taking account of the situation, lifted him up, and so cut off his head. This, says Gerson, is what the devil tries to do with the praises, honors, and esteem of the world, to lift us up, so to make us lose our heads and have the greater fall; therefore the truly humble man casts himself on the earth of his self-knowledge, and therefore dreads and shuns so much anything like being lifted up and esteemed.

The second step, says St. Anselm, is to bear with patience contemptuous treatment at the hands of other people; to take in good part any occasion that offers of your seeming to be undervalued and despised. We are not speaking now of desire of injuries and affronts, and going out of your way to seek them, and delighting and rejoicing in them;

of that we will treat afterwards, as it is a high point of perfection. What we are saying is that at least when occasion offers of something that makes for your discredit, you should bear it with patience, if not with joy, in accordance with that saying of the Wise Man: *All that cometh in thy way, although it be very contrary to thy liking and sensuality, take it well, and though it hurt thee, suffer it with humility and patience* (Ecclus. ii. 4). This is a very great means for attaining to humility and keeping it. Just as honor and the esteem of men is an occasion for pride and vanity, and therefore the saints fly from it so much, so all that makes for our disparagement and discredit is an excellent means to attain humility, and keep it and grow in it.

St. Lawrence Justinian says that humility is like a brook or stream that in winter rises to a great flood and is low in summer; so humility dwindles away in prosperity, and grows in adversity. Many are the occasions that present themselves to us for this every day, and we shall have fine exercise in humility if we are attentive and carefully on the alert to profit by them. That holy man (Å Kempis) well says: "What pleases others shall go forward; what pleases you shall make no way at all. What others say shall be listened to; what you say shall go for nothing. Others shall ask and receive; you shall ask and not obtain. Others shall be great in the mouths of men; of you no account shall be taken. To others this or that business shall be committed; you shall be judged no good for anything. Over this, nature will sometimes repine; but it will be a great point gained if you suffer it in silence." Let everyone take account of himself and run through the particular occasions that may and commonly do occur, and see how he behaves in them. See how you behave when an order is given you imperiously and peremptorily; see how you take it when they warn or reprove you for some fault; see how you feel when you fancy that the superior has not much confidence in you, but on the contrary is reserved in

dealing with you. St. Dorotheus says: Every occasion that offers of this sort, take it as a remedy and medicine to cure and heal your pride, and pray to God for him who offers you this occasion as for the physician of your soul, and be convinced that he who hates these things hates humility.

The third step that we have to mount is not to be glad or take any satisfaction when we are praised and thought highly of by men. This is more difficult than the former. St. Augustine says: "Though it is easy to do without praise, and not mind when we are not praised or honored, when that does not come in our way; yet not to be glad and take satisfaction in it when people do praise and show appreciation of us, is very difficult"—*Si cuiquam facile est laude carere dum denegatur, difficile est ea non delectari cum offertur*. St. Gregory treats this point very well on those words of Job: *If I have looked at the sun when it shone, and the moon when it came out bright, and the heart was glad within me* (Job xxxi. 26). St. Gregory says that Job means to say that he did not rejoice nor take any vain satisfaction in the praises and good opinion of men; such is the meaning of looking at the sun when it shines, and the moon when it comes out very bright: it means a man's looking at the good name and reputation that he has in regard of men and their praises, and delighting and taking satisfaction in that. He goes on to say that there is this difference between the proud and the humble, that the proud rejoice when men praise them and, though the good that they say of them be all a lie, still they rejoice, because they take no account of what they are truly and in the sight of God. All they aim at is being regarded and esteemed by men, and so they rejoice and revel in that, as a man does when he gains the end that he aims at. But when a man who is truly humble of heart sees that they are praising him and thinking and speaking well of him, he then humbles and is ashamed of himself, according to that text of the prophet: *Exaltatus autem humiliatus sum*

nimis (Psalm lxxxvii. 16)—“When they praised me, I then humbled myself the more, and was in greater shame and fear.” And with reason, for he fears that he may be all the more punished by God for not having the good qualities that he is praised for; or if perchance he has them, he fears lest his reward and recompense be paid in these praises, and they say to him afterwards: *Thou hast received in thy lifetime the reward of thy works* (Luke xvi. 25).

Thus that whence the proud take occasion to flatter their pride and vanity, namely, the praises of men, the same gives occasion to the humble to confound and humble themselves the more. And this, says St. Gregory, is the meaning of the Wise Man, when he says: *As silver is proved in the melting pot, and gold in the crucible, so is a man proved in the mouth of him who praises him* (Prov. xxvii. 21). The silver and gold, if it is bad, is consumed in the fire; but if it is good, is clarified and purified the more. So, says the Wise Man, is a man proved by his praises. If, when he is praised and thought highly of, the man is lifted up and grows vain with the praises that fill his ears, he is no good gold or silver, but false metal, since the crucible of the tongue consumes him; but he who on hearing his own praises thence takes occasion to humble himself and be the more ashamed, is gold and silver of the finest, since he is not consumed by the fire of praises, but the more purified and clarified thereby, inasmuch as he is more humble and ashamed of himself. Take this, then, for a sign if you are making progress in virtue and humility or not, since the Holy Ghost gives it to us as such. See if you are annoyed when they praise and value you or if you take pleasure and satisfaction therein, and then you will see whether you are gold or tinsel. We read of our Father Francis Borgia that nothing gave him so much pain as to see himself honored as a saint or servant of God. Someone asked him once why he was so much afflicted thereat, since he neither desired nor contrived it. He answered that he

reckoned he should have to give an account to God for it, he being such a different person from what he was taken for, which is just what we have just been saying from St. Gregory. So we should be so well grounded in self-knowledge that the winds of praises and human esteem should have no power to lift us up and draw us out of our nothingness. Rather it is then we should be more ashamed and confounded, seeing how false those praises are, and that there is in us none of that virtue that they praise, nor are we such as the world proclaims us and we ought to be.

CHAPTER XV

Of the Fourth Step, Which Is to Desire to Be Run Down, and Go for Little or Nothing, and to Rejoice Therein

THE fourth step to arrive at the perfection of humility is to desire to be run down and go for little or nothing amongst men, and to rejoice in ignominy, affronts, and insults. "The truly humble man," says St. Bernard, "is he who desires to be held cheap, not for a humble man but for a good-for-nothing, and rejoices in being so reputed by others." This is the second degree of humility, and in it consists the perfection thereof; and therefore, he says, humility is compared to spikenard, a small herb and sweet-smelling, according to the text of Canticle. *My spikenard hath given forth its odor* (Cant. i. 11); for then does the odor of this spikenard travel abroad and spread to others when you not only hold yourself cheap, but wish and desire that others also should despise you and hold you cheap.

St. Bernard observes that there are two sorts of humility: one in the understanding, which is when a man, studying himself and seeing his misery and vileness, thinks little of himself and judges himself to be worthy of all contempt and dishonor; the other in the will, which is when one wishes to be held cheap by others, and desires to be

despised and set at naught by all. In Christ our Redeemer, he says, there was not that former humility of the understanding, for Christ could not hold Himself cheap or worthy of contempt and dishonor, because He understood Himself right well and knew that He was true God and equal to the Father. *He took it not for a kind of usurpation to hold himself equal to God the Father, and nevertheless made little of himself and demeaned himself to taking the form of a servant* (Phil. ii. 6-7). But He had the second humility, that of heart and will, since for the great love that He bore us He chose to abase and degrade Himself and appear vile and contemptible before men. And so He says: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29) and of will. But in us both humilities must have place, for the first without the second is false and deceitful. To wish to appear and be counted by others different from what you really are, is falsehood and deceit. He who is truly humble and in all sincerity has a poor opinion of himself, despising himself and thinking little of himself, should rejoice that others also despise him and think little of him.

This is what we have to learn from Christ. See how heartily and with great good will He embraced insults and affronts for love of us. Not content with abasing and demeaning Himself by becoming man and taking the form and habit of a servant—He Who is Lord of heaven and earth—He would take the form and habit of a sinner. The Apostle says: *God sent his Son in the disguise and likeness of a sinful man* (Rom. viii. 3). He could not take sin, because that could not have place in Him; but He took the brand and mark of a sinner, since He chose to be circumcised as a sinner, baptized among sinners and publicans as though He were one of them, and made less account of than Barabbas and judged far worse and more unworthy of life than he. Finally, so great was the desire that He had for suffering affronts, scorn, and reproaches for love

of us that He thought that hour long a-coming in which, inebriated with love, He was to be stripped naked like another Noah exposed to the scorn of men. *I have a baptism wherewith to be baptized*, a baptism of blood, *and how I long for it to be carried into effect! With desire I have desired* that this hour should come for *eating this passover with you* (Luke xii. 50; xxii. 15), in which there shall be seen nothing but marks of scorn and reproaches never witnessed before, buffets and slaps on the face given as to a slave, His face spat upon as though He were a blasphemer, His person clad in a white garment like a fool, and with purple like a mock king, and above all, the scourges, a punishment for robbers and felons, and the torment of the Cross in company with thieves, which at that time was the most shameful and ignominious style of death that there was in the world. This is what with great desire Christ our Redeemer was desiring. *I was expecting reproaches and affronts*, says the prophet in His name (Psalm lxviii. 21), as a man expects a thing very agreeable and much to his liking, for of such things is expectation and hope, as fear is of things sad and painful. And the Prophet Jeremy says: *He shall be glutted with reproaches* (Lam. iii. 30). There He was, desiring that hour to be glutted with reproaches, marks of scorn and insult, as though it were a thing He greatly hungered after, and was very much to His liking and quite to His taste—for love of us.

Now since the Son of God desired with so great desire these marks of contempt and insult and took them so willingly and eagerly for our love, though He deserved them not, it will be no great thing for us, worthy as we are of all contempt and disdain, to desire for His love to be held at least for what we are and to rejoice in receiving the ignominious and contemptuous treatment that we deserve, as did the Apostle St. Paul when he said: *Wherefore I rejoice in my infirmities, in injuries, affronts, privations, persecutions and distresses for Christ* (II Cor. xii. 10). And

writing to the Philippians, speaking of his imprisonment, he asks them to share the joy that he felt at seeing himself thus put in chains for Christ (Phil. i. 7). He felt such abundance of joy in the persecutions and hardships that he suffered, that he wished to share that joy with his companions, and so he invited them to be partakers of his joy. This is the milk that the holy apostles sucked at the breast of Christ. And so we read of them that they went glad and rejoicing when they took them in fetters before presidents and synagogues, and reckoned it a great consolation and favor of God to be found worthy to suffer affronts and injuries for the name of Christ (Acts v. 41). In this the saints who came after them imitated them, as did St. Ignatius [of Antioch], who, when they were taking him to martyrdom at Rome with many insults and injuries, went with great joy, and said: "Now I begin to be a disciple of Christ."

This is what our Father wished us to imitate, and charged us therewith in words of great emphasis and weight. "They who enter and live in the Society," he says, "must take notice and reflect before our Creator and Lord to what a degree it aids and advances spiritual life to abhor entirely and not in part all that the world loves and embraces, and to take up with all the strength that we can command whatever Christ our Lord has loved and embraced. And as worldly men, who follow the world, love and seek with great diligence honors, fame, and the reputation of a great name on earth, as the world teaches them, so those who walk in spirit and follow Christ our Lord in earnest, love and desire intensely everything to the contrary, that is to say, to be clad in the same dress and livery as their Lord for His divine love and reverence; in so much that, when there is no offense of His Divine Majesty, nor any sin imputable to their neighbor, they would desire to suffer injuries, false witnesses, and insults, and to be held and accounted fools, without themselves giving any

occasion for the same, out of desire to look like and imitate in some sort Jesus Christ our Creator and Lord." In this rule there is summed up all that we can possibly say on humility. This it is to have left and abhorred in good earnest the world and that which is the subtlest thing in it, to wit, the craving and desire to be highly regarded and well thought of. This it is to be dead to the world and true religious; for as those in the world desire honor and reputation, and rejoice therein, so we should desire disgrace and marks of contempt, and rejoice therein. This it is to be of the Company of Jesus and Companions of Jesus, that we should keep Him company, not only in name, but in His slights and insults, and be clad in His livery, being outraged and despised by the world with Him and for Him, and be glad and rejoice therein for His love. Thou, O Lord, wert publicly proclaimed a wicked man and set between two thieves as a malefactor; allow not me to be proclaimed a good man, for it is not reasonable that the servant should be held in more honor than his Lord, and the disciple than the Master. Since, O Lord, they persecuted Thee and despised Thee, let them persecute me, despise me, insult me, that so I may imitate Thee, and show myself Thy disciple and companion. Father Francis Xavier used to say that he took it for an unworthy thing, for a man who ought ever to bear in mind the insults they offered to Christ our Lord, to take pleasure in any honor and veneration that men paid to him.

CHAPTER XVI

*That the Perfection of Humility and Other Virtues Lies
in Doing the Acts Thereof with Delight and
Pleasure, and How Important This Is
for Perseverance in Virtue*

IT is the common doctrine of philosophers that the perfection of a virtue lies in doing the acts thereof with delight and pleasure. Treating of the signs whereby it may be known whether anyone has gained a habit of any virtue, they say it is when he does the acts of that virtue with readiness, facility, and delight. He who has acquired the habit of any art or science, does the acts thereof with the greatest readiness and facility. Thus we see that he who is a musician, having acquired by this time the habit of music, plays a stringed instrument with the greatest facility and readiness, and need not prepare it beforehand nor be thinking of what he is doing, so that he plays right well while thinking of something else. In the same way does he the acts of a virtue who has acquired the habit of that virtue. Thus, if you wish to see whether you have acquired the virtue of humility, see first whether you do the acts of that virtue with readiness and facility; for if you feel repugnance and difficulty in the occasions that offer, it is a sign that you have not gained the virtue perfectly. And if to meet these occasions well you need anticipations and considerations, you are well on the road to gain the perfection of that virtue, but it must be said that this is a sign that as yet you have not gained it. You are like a man who, to play a stringed instrument, must needs go thinking where he is to put this finger and where that, and remembering the rules that have been given him. He is well on the way to learn how to play, but it is a sign that he has not yet acquired the habit of music, for he who has acquired that habit has no need to think of anything of

that sort to play well. So Aristotle says in his philosophy: "He who has perfectly acquired the habit of any art, finds it so easy to do the acts thereof that he has no need to set himself thinking or deliberating how to do them, to do them well." *Arte perfecta non deliberat*. This moves philosophers to say that it is in sudden and indeliberate acts that a man's virtue is known. Virtue is not known by acts that are done with a deal of study, but by acts that are done offhand.

Philosophers have yet more to say. Plutarch gives two signs to show when one has quite acquired a virtue. One of these signs is by the man's dreams; so writes a great philosopher named Zeno. If when you are asleep and dreaming you have no bad movements, no unseemly imaginations, or if when they come you take no satisfaction in them, but rather are annoyed, and resist as though you were awake the temptation and pleasure that comes in sleep, it is a sign that virtue has taken root in your soul, not only the will being subject to reason, but even the sensible appetite and imaginations. Thus, when carriage-horses are well broken in, even though the driver slackens the reins and goes to sleep, still the horses keep the right road; in like manner, says this philosopher, those who have a perfect habit of virtue and have tamed and subjected all their animal tendencies and instincts, go the right way even when asleep. St. Augustine also teaches this doctrine. Some servants of God have such a love and affection for virtue and the observance of the commandments of God and such an abhorrence of vice, and are so well formed and accustomed to resist temptations in their waking hours, that they resist them even in dreams. We read of Father Francis Xavier in his Life, that in a temptation or illusion which came upon him sleeping he resisted with such an effort that by the effort he threw up three or four mouthfuls of blood. In this way some explain that saying of St. Paul: *Waking or sleeping, we still live with him* (I Thess.

v. 10), in this sense, that not only living or dying we still live with Christ, which is the common interpretation, but that the fervent servants of God must ever live with Christ, not only when they are awake, but also when they are asleep and dreaming.

Philosophers go further and say that the third condition or mark whereby it is known when a man has perfectly acquired and gained a virtue, is when he does the acts thereof *delectabiliter*, with delight and satisfaction. This is the chief sign, and in it consists the perfection of the virtue. If, then, you wish to see whether you have gained the perfection of the virtue of humility, examine yourself by the rule that we gave in the last chapter; see whether you rejoice as much in affronts and insults as worldly people in marks of honor and esteem.

Besides the fact of this disposition's being necessary for the attainment of the perfection of any virtue, there is in it another very substantial advantage, that it has an important bearing on the durability and permanence of the virtue. So long as we do not attain to doing virtuous actions with satisfaction and cheerfulness, it will be a very difficult thing to persevere in virtue. St. Dorotheus says that this was the common teaching of the ancient Fathers. They took it for a well-established and certain fact, that he cannot go on long who does not do things gladly and cheerfully. It may well be that for some limited time you may keep silence and conduct yourself with modesty and recollection; but till such behavior proceeds from the innermost heart and becomes to you, as we may say, connatural by good habituation, so that you do the thing with pleasure and satisfaction, you will not carry on long in what will be an artificial and violent course. It is a thing that we may see with our own eyes that nothing violent is lasting—*nihil violentum perpetuum*. It is, therefore, very important for us to exercise ourselves in acts of virtue until the virtue is drunk in and deeply rooted in the heart, and looks

like a thing of one's own and, as they say, "comes natural" to us, and so we begin to do the works of the virtue cheerfully as having a taste for them; so we shall be able to get some warrant and security for our perseverance therein. This is what the prophet says: *Blessed is the man whose whole content and joy and delight is in the law of the Lord*, and such are his pleasures and diversions, *for he shall bear fruit of good works, like a tree planted by the running waters* (Psalm i. 2-3).

CHAPTER XVII

A Further Explanation of the Perfection That Must Be Secured to Mount to This Second Degree of Humility

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS adds another point to what has been said, and says that as the proud so much love honor and reputation that, to be more honored and esteemed by men, they often pretend and imply their possession of advantages which really they have not, as higher nobility, ampler fortune, better abilities and parts than what is actually theirs, so it is a very high humility that carries a man to such a desire of being despised and made naught of as at times, for that purpose, to pretend and suggest his having defects which he has not, that so he may be made less account of. We have an example of this, he says, in that Father Simeon, who, hearing that the governor of the province was coming to pay him a visit as being a famous man and a saint, took in his hand a piece of bread and cheese, and sitting at the door of his cell began to eat it after the fashion of one who was out of his wits. The governor, seeing this, despised him, at which he was much pleased, as having gained the very thing he wanted. We read the like examples of other saints, as of St. Francis, when he set himself to knead mud with his feet, to escape the honor and reception which they were preparing for

him; and of Brother Juniper, when he took to swinging with the boys for the same reason.

These saints had before their eyes the fact that the world despised the Son of God, the Sovereign and Infinite Goodness. Seeing the world to be so lying and so false, so deluded as not to recognize such a clear light as was the Son of God, and honor what was most truly honorable, they conceived such a hatred and abhorrence of the world and its good opinion that they rejected what it approves, and abhorred and despised what it values and loves. So they are very careful to shun being valued and esteemed by a power that has despised its God and Lord, and take their being despised by the world in His world in His company and for His sake for a great mark of their being loved by Christ. That is why the saints had such a taste for the reproaches, affronts, and insults of the world, and made such efforts to earn this contempt. It is true, says St. John Climacus, that many of these things were done by a particular inspiration of the Spirit of God, and so are rather for our admiration than for our imitation; nevertheless, though we do not come to put in practice those holy follies of the saints, we should aim at imitating them in the great love and desire they had of being despised and made small account of.

St. Diadochus goes on to say that there are two sorts of humility. The first is that of middle-class souls, who continue making progress, while they are at the same time under stress, assailed by thoughts of pride and evil impulses, though by the grace of God they contrive to resist them and cast them off in humility and shame. The other humility is that of the perfect; it is when the Lord imparts to a soul such light and knowledge of herself that pride seems no longer within the range of possibility, nor do any stirrings of pride and self-elation seem any longer possible. The soul then seems to have humility for part of her very nature—*tunc anima velut naturalem habet humilita-*

tem. Though God works great things by her, she is none the more elated on that score, nor thinks any more of herself, but rather holds herself for the least of all. This is the difference, he says, between these two sorts of humility, that the former commonly is attended with pain and a certain sadness and affliction—just what happens in fact in people who have not gained a perfect victory over themselves, but still feel a certain interior repugnance which causes in them pain and distress when any occasion befalls them of being humbled and put down; hence it comes to pass that, though they bear it with patience, they do not bear it with cheerfulness, there still remaining in them some element of repugnance because they have not gone all the way in the overcoming of their passions.

But the second humility is not in any way pained or troubled; rather it is with much cheerfulness that the humble man of this stamp stands in confusion and shame before the Lord, casting himself down and contemning himself, having nothing now about him to offer resistance, since he has overcome and subjected the contrary passions and vices and gained a perfect victory over himself. Hence also it is, says the saint, that they who have only the first humility are troubled and changed with the adversities and prosperities and various happenings of this life; but with them that have the second humility, neither adversity troubles them, nor does prosperity elate them or cause in them any self-conceit or vain complacency. They remain ever in one frame of mind and enjoy great peace and tranquillity, as men who have gained perfection and are superior to all these vicissitudes. There is nothing that can trouble or give pain to a man who desires to be made little of and rejoices therein. What might give him some pain, namely, to be forgotten and undervalued, is the very thing that he desires and that makes for his liking and contentment; what, then, can disturb him or give him pain? If that in which men think to be able to make war on him he finds to

be ground of much peace, who shall be able to rob him of his peace? So, says St. Chrysostom, such a one has found a paradise and a heaven upon earth. Who is better off than the man who finds himself in this state? He is anchored forever in port; free from every squall of wind and enjoying the calm serenity of his own thoughts.

This, then, is the perfection of humility that we must strive to attain. And let it not be made for us an impossibility, since by the grace of God, as St. Augustine says, we can imitate, if we will, not only the saints, but even the Lord of saints, since that same Lord Himself says that we are to learn of Him. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29). And the Apostle St. Peter says that He gave us an example for us to imitate. *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example to follow in his footsteps* (I Pet. ii. 21). St. Jerome on those words of Christ, *If thou wilt be perfect* (Matt. xix. 21), says that from these words it may be clearly argued that perfection is in our power, since Christ says, *If thou wilt. If thou sayest, I have not the strength, God knoweth well our weakness* (Prov. xxiv. 12); and nevertheless He says, *If thou wilt*, because He stands by to help us, and with His help we can do all things. Jacob saw a ladder, says the saint, that reached from earth to heaven, and by it angels went up and down, and at the end of the ladder, at the top of all, was seated the Almighty, to give a hand to those moving up and to animate us to the labor of the ascent by His presence. Do you, then, make it your endeavor to mount by this ladder and by these steps that we have said; He will give you a hand to reach as far as the top step. To a traveler looking from a distance at an entrance on a height, it seems impossible to get up there, but when he comes near and sees the path well trodden, it becomes to him quite easy.

CHAPTER XVIII

*Of Some Means to Gain This Second Degree of Humility,
and Particularly the Example of Christ Our Lord*

TWO manner of means are commonly given for acquiring moral virtues. One is by reasons and considerations apt to convince and animate us thereto; the other is by exercise of the acts of that virtue, as habits are acquired by acts. Beginning with the former kind of means, one of the chiefest and most efficacious considerations that we can make use of to help us to become very humble—or, rather, the chiefest and most efficacious of all—is the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master; we have already said something of it, but there always remains more to say. The whole life of Christ was a most perfect pattern of humility, from His birth to the moment when He expired upon the Cross. St. Augustine dwells particularly on the example He gave us in washing the feet of His disciples (John xiii.) the Thursday of the Supper, when He was now nearing His Passion and death. Christ our Redeemer, says St. Augustine, was not content with the examples of His whole past life, nor with those He was shortly to give in His Passion, now so near, where He was to appear, as Isaias says, *the last of men* (Isaias liii. 3), and as the Royal Prophet David says, *the reproach of men and the outcast of the people* (Psalm xxi. 7); but knowing that the hour was now come in which He was to depart from this world and go to the Father, He would show at the end of His life the great love that he bore to His own. Accordingly He rose from the table, laid aside His garment, girt Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin, and threw Himself down at the feet of His disciples, even those of Judas, and began to wash them with those divine hands, and wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. O great mystery! What is it, Lord, that Thou dost? *Lord, dost*

Thou wash my feet? The Lord answered St. Peter: *What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.* He resumed His seat at table and declared the mystery in right good earnest. *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am: if then I have washed your feet, your Master and Lord, ye also ought to wash one another's feet: for I have given you an example, that as I have done, ye also should do.* This is the mystery, that you should learn to humble yourself as I have humbled Myself. So great on the one hand is the importance of this virtue of humility, and on the other hand so great the difficulty there is in it, that He was not satisfied with the many examples He had given and now was on the point of giving us. He knew well our weakness, He had felt well the pulse of our heart, He quite understood the peccant humor of our disease; therefore He insisted so strongly on this particular and left it among His last directions by His last will and testament, the more to impress it on our hearts.

On those words of Christ: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart* (Matt. xi. 29), St. Augustine exclaims: "O wholesome doctrine! O Master and Lord of men, men on whom death came in by pride! What is it, O Lord, that Thou wishest us to learn of Thee? 'That I am meek and humble of heart. This it is that thou hast to learn of Me.' Are, then, all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Father summed up in this? Is it for this that those treasures are hidden away in Thee, that Thou shouldst tell us as a great thing to come to learn of Thee that Thou art meek and humble of heart? Is it such a great thing to make oneself a little one, that none could ever have learned the lesson, hadst not Thou, great as Thou art, made Thyself a little one?" Yes, says St. Augustine, so great and difficult a thing it is to humble oneself and make little of oneself, that had not even God humbled Himself and made little of Himself, men could never have succeeded in humbling themselves; for there is nothing so

ingrained in men's innermost hearts and nature as this desire to be honored and highly thought of; and thus all this was necessary to make men humble. Such a medicine did the infirmity of our pride require; such a wound, such a remedy. "If this medicine of God having made Himself man and humbled Himself so much for us, does not cure our pride, I know not," says St. Augustine, "what can cure it." If the sight of the Lord of Majesty so abased and humbled is not enough to make us ashamed of desiring to be honored and thought highly of and make us count it a gain to be despised and brought low as He was, I know not what can be enough. And so the Abbot Guerric, struck with admiration and profound conviction of so great an example of humility, cries out and says that is reasonable that we should utter and arrive thence at this resolution: "Thou hast conquered, O Lord, Thou has conquered my pride; Thou hast bound me hand and foot by Thy example: I surrender and give myself over to be Thy bondsman forever."

There is also another marvelous thought to this effect proposed by the glorious Bernard. He says the Son of God saw that noble creatures, high-born and capable of beatitude, whom God had created, were lost by seeking to be like to Him. God created the angels, and at once Lucifer sought to be like unto God. *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the Mountain of Testimony on the side of the north, I will mount above the clouds, I will be like the Most High* (Isaias xiv. 13), and he carried others with him. Thereupon God cast them into hell, and of angels they became devils. *But thou hast been hurled down into hell, into the lowest depth of the pit* (Isaias xiv. 15) God created man, and the devil infected him with his leprosy and his venom. *Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil* (Gen. iii. 5). They were smitten with a longing desire at what he said, that they should be like God; they broke His commandment, and

became like to the devil. The Prophet Eliseus said to his servant Giezzi: *Thou hast taken the riches of Naaman, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to thee and to all thy posterity for ever* (IV Kings v. 27). Such was God's sentence upon man, that, as he willed to have the riches of Lucifer, which was the guilt of his pride, the leprosy also should infect him, which was the punishment of that sin. Here, then, you see how man also was lost and made like the devil because he wished to be like God. What will it be well for the Son of God to do, seeing His eternal Father jealous and standing to arms for His honor? I see, He says, that My Father is losing His creatures on My account. The angels sought to be as I am, and were lost; man also sought to be as I am, and was lost; they all bore envy to Me, and sought to be as I am. Now observe: I will come in such a form, says the Son of God, that henceforth whoever shall seek to be as I am shall not be lost, but saved. For this the Son of God came down from heaven and became man. Oh, blessed, exalted, and glorified be such goodness and mercy, whereby God fell in with the great desire that we have to be like to Him, and now by no lying and falsehood, as the devil spoke, but in truth, and by no pride and wickedness, but with great humility and holiness, we may be like unto God. On those words, *Unto us a child is born* (Isaias ix. 6), the same saint says: "Since God, great as He is, has become a little child for our sake, let us endeavor to humble ourselves and make ourselves little children, that it may not be without profit to us that God has become a little child; for if you do not become as this child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER XIX

Of Some Human Reasons and Considerations That We Have at Hand to Help Us to Be Humble

FROM the outset of this treatise we have been alleging many reasons and considerations to aid and encourage us to this virtue of humility, saying how it is the root and foundation of all virtues; the short cut to gain them all; the means to preserve them; that if we hold this, we hold them all, and other things to the like effect. But that we may not seem to wish to carry everything by the way of the spirit, it will be well to enumerate some human reasons and considerations, more connatural and proportioned to our weakness, that, being thus convinced, not only by the way of the spirit and perfection, but also even by natural reason, we may animate and dispose ourselves more thoroughly to despise the honor and esteem of the world and take the road of humility. For a purpose so difficult as this we need every inducement we can get, and so it is well to avail ourselves of all. Be this, then, the first point, to set ourselves to consider and examine very leisurely and attentively what manner of thing is this opinion and esteem of men which makes so much war upon us and gives us such matter of thought. Let us look at bulk and weight together, that so we may fix upon what it is, and encourage ourselves to despise it, and not be deluded by it as we are deluded.

Seneca says very well that there are many things which we reckon great, not from any greatness that they have in themselves, but because of our meanness and littleness being such that we take small for great and little for much. He gives the example of the burden that ants carry, which looks great in comparison of the size of their bodies, but is in itself very small. So it is with the honor and esteem of men. Otherwise, I ask you, are you any better for oth-

ers' taking you for a person of consequence, or worse for their making little account of you? Certainly not, St. Augustine says: "Neither is evil made good for being praised and esteemed, nor good made evil for being despised and found fault with. Think of Augustine what you please; what I wish and care for is that my conscience may not accuse me before God." That it is that matters; the rest is vanity, since it neither takes away from you nor brings you in anything. So that holy man (Å Kempis) says: "What better is any man for another man's praising him? What each one is in the eyes of God, such he is and no more, says the humble St. Francis"—or rather, the Apostle St. Paul: *It is not he that commends and praises himself that is approved for good, but he whom God commends and praises* (II Cor. x. 18).

St. Augustine makes a good comparison to this purpose. "Pride and the esteem of the world is not greatness, but wind and swelling; and as, when a thing is swollen out, it appears great and is not, so the proud, who are regarded and esteemed of men, appear great but are not, since that is no real greatness, but a swelling." There are convalescents or invalids who appear stout and in good condition, but theirs is no healthy fat, only infirmity and swelling. Such, says St. Augustine, is the applause and esteem of the world; it may bloat you out, but it cannot make you great. If, then, this is the case, as indeed it is, that the opinion and esteem of men is not greatness, but a swelling and infirmity, why do we go about like chameleons, open-mouthed, gulping down wind, thereby to make ourselves swollen out and infirm? It is better for a man to be well though he looks ill, than to be ill and appear well. So also it is better to be a good man, though accounted no good, than to be no good and accounted good. For what will it profit you to be accounted virtuous and spiritual, if you are not so? *Let her works praise her in the gates* (Prov. xxxi. 31). On these words St. Jerome says: "It is not the

vain praises of men, but your own good works, that have to praise you and avail you when you appear at the judgment seat of God."

St. Gregory relates that there was in a monastery in Iconia a monk of whom all had a great opinion as a saint, especially for being very abstemious and penitent. When the hour of his death approached, he called all the monks; they came readily, expecting to hear of him something of edification. But he, trembling and in great distress of mind, was fain by an inward impulse to tell them his state. So he declared to them that he was damned for having been a hypocrite all his life; and when they thought he was fasting and doing great abstinence, all the while he was eating on the sly without anyone's seeing him. And for that, he said, I am now given over to a fearful dragon, who with his tail holds my feet fast tied, and is now putting his head into my mouth to draw out my soul and carry it off with him forever. And so saying he expired, to the great terror of all. What did it profit this wretch to have been taken for a saint?

St. Athanasius compares proud men seeking honors to children running after butterflies. Others compare them to spiders, who disembowel themselves spinning their webs to catch flies, according to Isaias: *They have spun spider's webs* (lix. 5). So the proud man fetches up his inside, as they say, to gain a little human praise. We read of Father Francis Xavier that he felt and always showed a particular hatred and abhorrence of this opinion and esteem of the world; he said it was the cause of great evils and a hindrance to much good. So he was heard to say sometimes with great emotion and groaning: "O opinion and esteem of men, what evils hast thou done, art doing, and will do!"

CHAPTER XX

*Of Some Other Human Considerations to Help to
Make Us Humble*

ST. CHRYSOSTOM upon those words of St. Paul: *Not to be high-minded rather than right minded, but to be minded unto sober-mindedness* (Rom. xii. 3), proves very systematically that the proud and arrogant man is not only an evil and sinful man, but stark mad. He quotes to that effect Isaias (xxxii. 6): *The fool shall utter foolish things*; and from the foolish things that he utters you may understand he is a fool. See, then, the follies that the proud and arrogant man gives vent to, and you will see that he is a fool. What is it, then, the first proud creature said, that was Lucifer? *I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the Mountain of Testimony on the side of the north, I will mount above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High* (Isaias xiv. 13-14). Was there ever such madness? And in the tenth chapter the prophet puts other words—still more arrogant and insane, of Asur, King of the Assyrians, who boasted that his powerful hand had overcome and subjected all the kings of the earth. *My hand hath found as it were a nest the strength of peoples; and as eggs are gathered that are deserted, so have I gathered in the whole earth, and there was none to move a wing and open his mouth and utter a cry* (Isaias x. 14) “Could madness further go?” asks St. Chrysostom. And he quotes many other words of proud men, plain evidences of their madness. Hearing them, you could not tell whether they were merely the words of a proud man or of a man who was literally mad, so mad and extravagant are they. And we see that, as madmen move us to laughter by the insane things they say and do, so also the proud afford matter of laughter and conversation by the arrogant language they use, redound-

ing to their own praise, by the authoritative demeanor that they assume, the notice that they claim for themselves and their doings, and the high notion they have of them. St. Chrysostom adds that the folly of the proud is worse, and worthy of greater blame and ignominy than that of the born idiot, since in the latter case there is no fault or sin, but in theirs there is. Hence follows another difference between those two kinds of madness, that born idiots inspire compassion and move all beholders to grief and commiseration for their affliction, but the madness of the proud inspires no compassion nor pity, but laughter and scorn.

Thus the proud are mad, and so we treat them as such. As we fall in with what a madman says to keep the peace with him, though in fact the thing is not so, and you do not think it is so, but you have no mind to contradict the man, because he is mad: that is the way we behave with the proud. This humor of pride has such a reign in the world at this day that one can scarcely converse with men without flattering them and saying of them what really is not the case; nor do you take it to be so, because the person you are speaking with has such a passion for being told that his doings give satisfaction and are well thought of, that to satisfy him and gain his good will you find no better expedient than to praise him. This is one of the vanities and follies that the Wise Man says he saw in the world, the wicked being praised for being in high places as if they were good. *I saw the burials of the wicked, who in life were in the holy place, and were praised as though they were good; but that too was vanity* (Eccles. viii. 10). Many a time they praised you for what you had done badly and for that which even to them appeared badly done; and the joke of the thing is that to others they had already told the truth and spoken their real minds, but to you, as the price of giving you satisfaction, sometimes they stickle not at telling a downright lie; at other times they seek cir-

cumlocutions and roundabout expressions, short of lying, to be able to speak well of what they take to be a bad performance. That is, they treat you as a madman, and fall in with what you want said. The person you are speaking to understands that this is your humor and that you delight in being dealt with in this manner. And the tit-bit of the entertainment is, after you have preached or done something of that sort, to tell you that you came out very well, that everybody was much pleased. They treat you thus to keep you well satisfied and gain your good will, as perchance they have need of you. What this serves for is to make you more of a fool; for they praise what you have spoken or done badly, and thereby set you more in the way of doing it another time.

The men of today dare not speak their minds, for they know that truths embitter—*veritas odium parit*. They know that, as a man in a mad frenzy resists medical appliances and spits at the doctor who endeavors to treat his case, so the proud man resists good advice and correction. And therefore men have no mind to tell another what they know he cannot stomach, for no man wishes to buy himself trouble; rather they give him to understand that they think well of what they think a poor performance; and the other is so taken up with himself as to believe them. Hence also it will be seen how true it is that we said in the last chapter, how great vanity and folly it is to take account of the praises of men, since we know that at the present day all that is empty compliments, deceit, flattery, and lying: so that some hence even explain the noun *cumplimiento*, *cumplo y miento*, "He humored and lied," "He lied to humor you."

Moreover, the proud, says St. Chrysostom, are abhorred by all—by God, in the first place, as the Wise Man says: *Every arrogant and proud man is an abomination before God* (Prov. xvi. 5). And of seven things that God abhors, He puts pride in the first place (Prov. vi. 16). And not only

before God, but also before men they are abhorred. *Pride is hateful before God and men* (Ecclus. x. 7). As those who have diseased livers and bowels emit a stench that none can endure, such are the proud (Ecclus. xi. 32). The world itself gives them herein the fee of their pride, punishing them in that which they were aiming at. It all turns out to them the other way about; they think to be regarded and esteemed by all, and they come to be regarded as fools. They look to be sought after by all, and just the other way about—the proud man is by all the world abhorred; abhorred by his betters because he wishes to equal them; abhorred by his equals because he wishes to lord it over them; abhorred by his inferiors because he makes exorbitant demands upon them. Hence servants speak ill of their master and cannot endure him, when he is proud. *Where there is pride, there shall be discredit* (Prov. xi. 2). On the contrary, the humble man is regarded and esteemed, sought and loved by all. As children are very lovable by their goodness, innocence, and simplicity, so, says the glorious St. Gregory, are the humble; such simplicity and plainness of speech, and manner of acting without pretense or duplicity, gains all hearts. Humility is the loadstone which draws hearts to itself; all seem to wish to cherish the humble.

To make an end of persuading us that it is folly to desire and strive after the esteem and good opinion of men, St. Bernard constructs an excellent dilemma, concluding thus: Either it was folly of the Son of God to abase and demean Himself so much as to choose contempt and insult, or it is great folly on our part so much to desire the honor and esteem of men. But it was not folly on the part of the Son of God, nor could it be, though to the world it seemed so. So says St. Paul: *We preach Christ crucified, a scandal to the Jews, and a folly and infatuation to the Gentiles; but to them that are elected to the faith, whether from Jews or Greeks or Gentiles, it is Christ the proof of the omnipo-*

tence and wisdom of God (I Cor. i. 23). To the blind and proud heathen it appeared folly on the part of Christ; but to us, who have the light of faith, it appears sovereign wisdom and infinite love. But if this is sovereign wisdom, it follows that ours is folly, and we are the fools for making so much account of the opinion and esteem of men and the honor of the world.

CHAPTER XXI

*That a Sure Way to Be Regarded and Esteemed by Men
Is to Give Oneself Up to the Virtue of Humility*

IF after all that we have said you are not yet brought to the point of abandoning the fumes and breaking off the aspirations and desires of honor and esteem, but say that after all good credit and reputation is a great thing with men and makes much for edification and other purposes, and that the Wise Man advises us to take care of it: *Have a care of a good name* (Ecclus. xli. 15), I say: "Well, be it so; I am satisfied that you should take care to preserve the good name that you have, and be regarded and greatly esteemed by men; but you must know that you are very much out in the way in which you desire it, even in point of attaining your object, since in that way you will never attain it, but rather the contrary." The sure and safe way whereby without doubt you will come to be regarded and esteemed by men, says St. Chrysostom, is the way of virtue and humility. Take care to be a good religious, the least and humblest of all, and to show yourself such in your behavior on all occasions that offer, and in that way you will be much regarded and esteemed by all. This is the honor of the religious who has left the world; better becomes him the broom in his hand and the poor habit and the lowly and humble dress than the arms and the horse become the knight; and on the other hand the desire to be

regarded and esteemed by men is a great reproach and disgrace to him. As it would be a great reproach and disgrace to leave religion and go back to the world, and rightly would people mock at such a one because *he had put his hand to build and was not able to finish* (Luke xiv. 30), so is the desire and pretense to be regarded and esteemed by men; for this is to go back to the world in heart, since that is the choicest thing in the world, and that it was that you gave up and abandoned when you entered religion.

Would you see clearly what a shameful and shocking thing it is, this desire to be esteemed and honored by men, in anyone who professes to aim at perfection? Let this desire come to light, so that others should get to see what you desire, and you will see how hurt and angry you yourself will be at the thing's getting known. We have a good example of this in the holy Gospel. The evangelists relate how one day the apostles were going with Christ our Redeemer at a little distance from Him, where they thought He would not hear, and they fell to disputing and contending amongst themselves which should be the greater and the chief (Mark ix. 33). When they came to the house in Capharnaum, He asked them: *What is it that you were talking about on the way?* The holy Gospel says that the poor men were so upset and ashamed at seeing their ambitious pretensions discovered that they could not open their mouths to answer Him. Then the Saviour of the world took up the discourse and said to them: Look, My disciples, there in the world, among men who follow its laws, they are held to be great who are in office and command. But in My school it is the other way about; the greater must become the less and be the servant of all. *If anyone wishes to be the first, let him be the last of all, and the servant of all* (Mark ix. 34). In the house of God and religion to be humbled and put down is to be great, and to become the least of all is to be regarded and esteemed more than all. This is honor here in religion. That other that

you aim at is not honor, but dishonor; and in place of gaining regard and esteem you come thereby to forfeit esteem and to be held in least account of all, because you get the name of a proud man, which is the greatest come-down that you can hit upon. By nothing can you lose so much as by the notion's getting abroad that you desire and aim at being regarded and esteemed by men and that you stand on points of honor and are sensitive on those trifles.

St. John Climacus says well that vainglory often brings ignominy on its votaries because it makes them fall into things that lay bare their vanity and ambition, and so incur great reproach and confusion. The proud man does not see that in the things that he says and does to gain esteem he discovers the unmeasured craving of his pride and disgraces himself where he thought to gain credit. St. Bonaventure adds that pride so blinds the understanding that often the more pride a man has, the less is he aware of it himself, and so, like a blind man, the proud man says and does things that he would nowise say or do if he bethought himself, apart from any motive of God or virtue, but merely for the sake of that same honor and esteem that he desires. How often does it happen that a man is resentful and complains because they have taken no account of him on such and such an occasion or because they have given the preference to another in such or such an appointment when he fancies that it ought to have fallen to him, and that they have done him an injury thereby and it will redound to his dishonor and discredit and be a stigma upon him, and that others will not fail to see and take notice of it, and under color of this pretense he lets all the world know his mind. Thereby, in point of fact, he is all the more noted and discredited, being taken for a proud man and a man that stands on points of honor, which here in religion is a thing very much disliked; whereas if he dissembled his feelings on this occasion and put himself out of account

and let superiors do what they would, he would gain much honor and be greatly esteemed therefore.

Then, though it were not by way of the spirit, but by the law of prudence and good sense and even the law of the world, the right and sure road to being regarded and esteemed, sought after and loved by men, is to give oneself in earnest to the virtue of humility. Even in profane history it is told of Agessilaus, King of the Lacedemonians and a great pundit amongst them, that, being asked by Socrates what he should do to make all men esteem and think well of him, he answered: "Try to be such as you desire to appear." Another time, in answer to the same question, he replied: "Try always to speak well and to do better." And of another philosopher (Pindar) it is related that he had a great friend, who on every occasion spoke highly in his favor. One day this friend said to him: "You are much in my debt, since wherever I happen to be, I greatly praise and extol your virtues." The philosopher answered: "I pay you well by living in such a manner that you do not lie in any of the things you say of me."

We do not mean hereby to say that we should give ourselves to virtue to be regarded and esteemed by men, which would be great pride and perversity. What we mean is that, if you contrive to be humble in earnest and from your heart, you will be greatly regarded and esteemed, although you do not seek it; rather, the more you fly from honor and esteem and desire to be made small account of, the more it will follow you and cling to you like a shadow. St. Jerome, speaking of St. Paula, says: "Flying from honor and esteem, she was honored and esteemed the more, as the more one flies from his shadow, the more it follows him; and, on the other hand, if you try to catch your shadow, it will fly from you, and the more you run to catch it, the more it will fly, so that you cannot come up with it. Such is honor and esteem."

Christ our Redeemer teaches us this method in the Gospel, where He shows us how to obtain the most honorable places and seats in company. *When thou art invited to a wedding-feast, do not take the place of honor, lest some guest more honorable than thou may have been invited by the master; and then he that hath invited you both, coming in, may say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou shalt begin with shame to take the lowest place; but when thou art invited, go and take the lowest place, that when he that hath invited thee cometh he may say, Friend, go up higher: then thou shalt have glory before them that sit at table* (Luke xiv. 8-11). And this is what the Holy Ghost had said before by the mouth of the Wise Man: *Do not play the great man in the presence of the King, nor seat thyself in the seats of the mighty: it is better that they should say to thee, Come up hither, than that thou shouldst be humbled before the prince* (Prov. xxv. 6-7). And he continues the parable, saying: *Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11). You see how not only before God, but also before men, the humble man, who chooses the low and abject position, is honored and esteemed; and, on the other hand, the proud who desires and puts in for the first place and the best and most honorable posts, is despised and made of less account. St. Augustine ("Ad Fratres de Eremo") cries out saying: "O holy humility, how unlike thou art to pride! Pride, my brethren, hurled Lucifer from heaven, but humility brought the Son of God to make Himself man. Pride cast Adam out of paradise, but humility lifted up the good thief there. Pride divided and confounded the tongues of the giants; humility gathered together the divided. Pride changed King Nabuchodonosor into a beast, but humility made Joseph lord of Egypt and prince of the people of Israel. Pride drowned Pharaoh, but humility lifted up and exalted Moses."

CHAPTER XXII

*That Humility Is the Means to Attain True Peace of Soul,
and We Shall Never Arrive at That without It*

LEARN of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls (Matt. xi. 29). One of the principal and most efficacious motives that we can allege to encourage ourselves to despise the honor and esteem of the world and aim at being humble is that which Christ our Redeemer proposes to us in these words; namely, that it is the only way to attain inward peace and quiet of soul, a thing so desirable that St. Paul sets it down for one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost (Gal. v. 22). The fruit of the Spirit is peace. Better to understand the peace and quiet of soul that the humble man enjoys, it will be well to see the restlessness and turmoil which the proud man carries in his heart, since contrary is known by contrary. Holy Scripture is full of pronouncements that the wicked enjoy no peace. *There is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord* (Isaias xlviii. 22). *Peace, peace, and there is no peace* (Jerem. vi. 14). *Wreckage and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known* (Psalm xiii. 3). They do not know what manner of thing it is to have peace; and though sometimes they have the external appearance of peace, it is not true peace, for there within their heart they have war, the war which their own conscience is ever making on them. *Lo, in the midst of peace my bitterness was most bitter* (Isaias xxxviii. 17). The wicked ever live in bitterness of heart.

But particularly the proud carry about with them great restlessness and turmoil. The special reason of this we may gather well from St. Augustine, who says that of pride there is born at once envy, as a legitimate daughter, and never but in company with this evil daughter is the evil mother. These two evil companions, he says, pride and

envy, make the devil a devil. Thereby it will be understood what work these two evil beings will do in man, seeing that they suffice to make the devil a devil. He who lives on the one hand full of pride and of desires of honor and esteem and sees that things do not turn out according to his plans, and on the other hand lives at the same time full of envy, which is the daughter of pride and her inseparable companion, when he sees others regarded and esteemed and preferred to himself, must clearly be full of gall and bitterness and great turmoil and restlessness, for there is nothing so painful to a proud man, nothing that so much cuts him to the heart, as one of these things.

Holy Scripture paints this to the life in that proud Aman. He was a great favorite with King Assuerus, above all the princes and grandees of the kingdom; he had abundance of riches and temporal goods; he was greatly regarded and made much of by all, so that it looked as though he had nothing more on earth to desire. Yet with all that he was so put out at one single man of low estate, remaining seated at the gates of the palace, taking no notice of him, not doffing his cap nor rising, nor moving from his place when he passed by, that he reckoned nothing of all the fortune that he had in comparison with the pain and trouble that he felt at that annoyance. So he confessed himself, complaining of it to his friends and to his wife, declaring his prosperity and power: *But while I enjoy such great satisfactions, it seems to me that I have nothing, while I see that Jew Mardochai seated at the gates of the palace* (Esther v. 13). Hereby is seen the unrest of pride and the waves and storms that arise in the proud man's heart. *The wicked are as a raging sea, that cannot rest* (Isaias lvii. 20). As the sea in its wild fits, so is the heart of the wicked and the proud. Such was the rage that Aman conceived in his heart on this occasion that he thought it a mere nothing to lay hands on this individual; but, knowing that he was a Jew by birth, he obtained patent letters from King

Assuerus, providing that all the Jews in his kingdom should die. As for Mardochai, he prepared in his garden a very high gallows to hang him thereon. But his dream turned out quite the other way; for the Jews executed upon their enemies the sentence that had been passed on them; and Aman himself was fastened to the gallows that he had made ready to hang Mardochai.

But before that there had befallen him another sore disappointment. It was this. One morning, when he was plotting his vengeance, he had risen early and betaken himself to the palace to get leave from the king for that purpose. Now it happened that the king had not been able to sleep that night, and bade them bring and read to him the history and chronicle that was written of his times. When they came to the service that Mardochai had rendered the king, discovering to him a treasonable plot that some of his courtiers were hatching against him, he asked: "What reward and recompense has been given this man for this so great service and fidelity?" They answered, "None." The king said: "Who is there? Has anyone come to the palace?" They told him: "Aman is here outside." "Let him then come in." Aman came in, and he asked: "What will be the right thing to do to a man whom the king desires to honor?" Aman, thinking that he must be the man whom the king desired to honor, answered: "The man whom the king desires to honor must be clad in the royal robes and mounted on the king's own horse, with the royal crown on his head; and one of the chief knights of the court must go before him, leading the horse by the bridle, and proclaiming through the streets: Thus shall be honored the man whom the king desires to honor." The king said to him: "Go, then, to that Mardochai who is at the gates of the palace and do all that thou hast said, and see that thou failest not on a single point." See the grief that this sad and proud heart must have felt! However, he could do no less, but executed all the command to the letter. One would

think that no greater mortification for him could be imagined; and shortly after it came about that he was hung on the gallows he had prepared for Mardochai. This is the pay that the world is wont to give to its own. And see whence started the pip in the hen, as they say: it was from the other's not taking off his cap or standing up when the great man passed.

A trifle like this is enough to distress and disturb the proud and keep them in perpetual annoyance and bitterness. So we see today in persons of the world, and the more, the higher their rank. These points make so many punctures to prick and pierce their heart; there is no stroke of a lance that they feel so much. And something of this is never wanting to the proud ones of the world, however much they enjoy favor and hold position; thus they ever carry with them a heart of bitterness more bitter than gall, and live in perpetual restlessness and dissatisfaction. And it will be the same here in religion if a man is proud, for he also will make a grievance of their not reckoning so much of him as of other people, and of their selecting So-and-So for such an appointment and leaving him out in the cold; these and the like complaints will cause him as much disturbance as their points of honor and pretensions cause in worldly people, and haply more. How many have had their vocation imperiled by these things! How many people have been led on thereby to leave their order, on the plea that they could not live in it without being insulted and that they were not well thought of nor properly appreciated there! How many have had their salvation jeopardized in this way! Humility is not only necessary for perfection, but oftentimes for salvation. *Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xviii. 3). Oh, with how much reason used Father Francis Xavier to say: "O opinion, O opinion and esteem of men, what evils hast thou done, art doing, and shalt do!"

Hence will be understood another point of very common experience, that, though it is true that there is such a thing as sickness of melancholy, yet very often a man's being melancholy and sad does not come of any humor of melancholy or bodily ailment, but of a humor of pride and spiritual infirmity. You are sad and melancholy because you are left out in the cold, thrust into a corner, and no account taken of you. You are sad and melancholy because in the situation whence you thought to come off with honor, you came away without it; or, rather, you fancy it issued in your shame and confusion. The thing did not succeed as you had wished; the sermon did not go off, nor the disputation, nor the academical theses, as you thought it should have done; rather, you fancy you lost your credit and reputation over it, and therefore you are sad and melancholy. When you have to make any of these public displays, the fear of how it is to go, and whether you are to gain honor or lose it, makes you sad and distressed. These are the things that make a proud man sad and melancholy. But the humble of heart, who has no desire of honor and reputation and is content with a low place, is free from all these anxieties and distresses and enjoys profound peace, according to those words of Christ which that holy man (Å Kempis) took up: "If anywhere there is peace on earth, the humble of heart possesses it." Thus were it for no spiritual motive or desire of perfection, but only in our own interest and the keeping of peace and quiet in our heart, for that sole motive we should make it our endeavor to be humble; for this is to live, and the other course is to die a living death.

St. Augustine relates to this purpose an incident in his own life, wherein he says the Lord gave him to understand the blindness and misery in which he then lived. When I was very busy, he says, over a speech which I had to deliver before the emperor, telling his praises, most of which had to be false, and I was praised for it by those

who knew them to be false—for such is the vanity and folly of the world—I was under a load of care about the business, very pensive and fanciful as to my prospects of success, quite in a fever of consuming thoughts. Well, it happened that, passing through a street of Milan, I saw a poor beggarman, who had had a meal and some drink besides, playing amusing tricks in high glee. When I saw him, I said to my friends who were there: “How pitiable are our follies! In all our labors (as in those in which we were then taken up), dragging uphill the load of our happiness, wounded with the pricks of a thousand greedy cravings, and adding load to load, we were seeking and arriving at nothing but to gain some assured joy, a thing in which yon poor man is getting the start of us already, and we perchance shall never reach it.” What he had attained by means of some small alms given him, I was seeking with so many labors and mischances; I mean, the joy of earthly felicity. Sooth to say, goes on St. Augustine, that poor man was not in possession of true joy; but the joy that I was seeking with my ambitious efforts was more false than his; and after all he was in mirth, and I in sadness; he felt safe, and I was under a thousand fears and turmoils. And if anyone should ask me which I would rather choose, joy or sadness, I would answer him that I would rather choose joy; and if he asked me again whether I would rather be as that man was or as I was myself, then I would rather choose to be as I was myself, full as I was of troubles and mishaps. And I should have no reason for that preference; otherwise, I ask, what reason had I for it? I should not have preferred myself to that poor man on the score of my knowing more than he did, because, allowing that, it afforded me no satisfaction, but all that I desired with my knowledge was to please men; not to teach them, but simply to gratify them. Beyond doubt, he says, that man was happier than I was, not only because he was merry, and I a prey to cares that gnawed my entrails; but also because he

had got his sup of wine by fair means, while I was seeking vainglory by telling lies.

CHAPTER XXIII

Of Another Manner of Means More Effectual for Gaining the Virtue of Humility: By Practising It

WE have spoken of the first sort of means that are usually given for gaining virtue, namely, reasons and considerations, as well divine as human. But such is the inclination that we have to this vice of pride, by reason of our having so rooted in our heart that desire of divinity shown by our first parents (Gen. iii. 5), that all the considerations in the world suffice not finally to destroy these spirits and fumes of desire to be regarded and esteemed. It seems to happen to us in this matter as to people who have taken a fright. However many reasons you give them to persuade them that there is nothing to be alarmed at, they tell you: "I quite see that all you say is true and I should be very glad to act on it; but for all that I cannot bring myself to shake off the fear." So some say: "I quite see that all these reasonings that you have given about the opinion and esteem of the world are correct and prove convincingly that it is but a puff of wind and vanity, but, after all, I cannot bring myself to disregard it; I should like to do so, but somehow, without my wanting it, these things upset me and carry me away." As, then, to rid a timid person of fear, reasonings and considerations are not enough, but along with them we are wont to give him things to do for remedies, telling him to go up and touch these seeming ghosts and bogeys, and to go at nighttime to dark and lonely places to experience and see that there is nothing there but mere imagination and apprehension of his own, and so he gradually shakes off his fear; in like manner, to succeed in setting at naught the opinion and

esteem of the world, the saints tell us that reasonings and considerations are not enough, but it is necessary for that end to have recourse to deeds and practices of humility, and that this is the chiefest and most efficacious means that we can apply on our part to gain that virtue.

St. Basil says that, as sciences and arts are acquired by practice, so also are moral virtues. To be a good musician, or a good mechanic, or a good rhetorician or philosopher, you must needs practise the art a great deal, and in this way you will come out a proficient in it. So also to gain the habit of humility and of the other moral virtues, you must practise their acts, and in this way you will gain them. And if anyone says that to compose and moderate the passions and affections of the soul and gain the corresponding virtues, all that is wanted is reasons and considerations and instructions and lessons from Scripture and the saints, he deceives himself, says St. Basil. It will be with him as with a man who thinks to learn how to build, or to coin money, and never practises it, but is wholly taken up with hearing lessons and instructions on the art. It is certain that he will never turn out a workman; just as little will he ever turn out a proficient in humility or in the other virtues who does not practise himself in them. St. Basil quotes in confirmation of this that text of St. Paul the Apostle: *Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified* (Rom. ii. 13). It is not enough to hear many reasons and instructions, but it is necessary to put the thing into execution, and in this business practice and exercise is worth more and carries you further than all the theory in the world. And though it is true that every virtue and every good gift must come to us from the hand of God and that our own strength is not sufficient for this purpose, nevertheless this same Lord, Who is to give it us, requires that we help ourselves in this manner.

St. Augustine on those words of Christ: *If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet* (John xiii. 14), says that this is what Christ our Redeemer wished to teach us by this example of washing the feet of His disciples. "This it is, blessed Peter, that thou knewest not when thou wouldst not consent to Christ's washing thy feet. He promised that thou shouldst know it in aftertime. Now is the aftertime, now thou shalt know it." It is that, if we wish to gain the virtue of humility, we must exercise ourselves in acts of humility. *I have given you an example, that ye may do as I have done* (John xiii. 15). Since the Sovereign and Almighty has humbled Himself; since the Son of God has abased Himself and busied Himself in humble and lowly exercises, washing the feet of His disciples, serving His Mother and St. Joseph, and being subject and obedient to them in all that they commanded Him, let us learn of Him and exercise ourselves in lowly and humble exercises, and in this way we shall gain the virtue of humility. This is also what St. Bernard says: "Exterior humiliation is the way and means to gain the virtue of humility, as patience to gain peace, and reading and study to gain knowledge." Accordingly, if you desire to gain the virtue of humility, shun not the practices of humiliation; for if you say that you cannot and have no mind to humble and abase yourself, neither can you gain the virtue of humility.

St. Augustine proves this right well, and gives the reason why this exterior practice of humiliation is so important and necessary an aid to the gaining of true humility of heart. "When the body is bowed down to your brother's feet, then also in the heart itself there is excited—or if it was there already, there is confirmed—the sentiment of humility." The exterior and interior man are so knit and bound together, and the one depends so much on the other, that, when the body is humbled and bowed down, there is awakened there within the heart a sentiment of humility.

There is something in this humbling of myself before my brother to serve him and kiss his feet; there is something in a poor and mean dress and a lowly and humble office: it seems to go to engender and beget humility in the heart; or if it is already there, it goes to preserve and increase it. And so St. Dorotheus answered the question: How can the soul gain humility from a mean and poor dress worn by the body? "Because it is certain," he said, "that the disposition of the body for better or worse reacts upon the soul." Thus we see that the disposition of the soul varies according as the body is well or ill, satisfied with food or hungry. In the same way a man is otherwise disposed when mounted on a well-caparisoned horse or seated on a throne, than he would be when riding an ass or sitting on the ground. So, too, his sentiments and mood differ according as he is richly dressed or shabbily and poorly clad.

St. Basil also notes this well. He says that, as the hearts of men in the world are lifted up, and the fumes of vanity and pride and self-esteem engendered in them, by their being well and stylishly dressed, so in religious and servants of God a poor and humble habit awakens in the heart a sentiment of humility and induces a low opinion of self and seems to make the man despicable. And the saint adds that, as men of the world look for good and fashionable clothes in order to be better known and made more account of and respected, so the servants of God and the truly humble look out for poor and mean garments, to be thereby underrated and thought less of amongst men, and because they think that they have therein a great preservative to keep and increase in themselves true humility. Of all exterior humiliations one of the chief is that of a poor and mean dress, and that is why it is so usual among the truly humble. Of Father Francis Xavier we read in his Life that he always went about very poorly clad to keep himself in humility, and because he feared that in fine clothes there

might be involved and mingled some self-esteem and presumption, as does usually happen.

For another reason it will also be seen what a great help to the gaining of humility of heart or any other interior virtue is the exterior practice of the same. For the will is much more moved thereby than by mere desires, since clearly a present object moves more forcibly than an absent one; thus what we see with our eyes moves us more than what we merely hear. Hence was derived the proverb: "Where eyes see not, heart breaks not." Thus the exterior, which is put into act by reason of the object's being there present, moves the will much more than an interior apprehension and desire, where the object is not present, but has place only in the imagination and apprehension. The virtue of patience will make greater growth in your soul by one great affront borne with good will than by three or four existing in desire only without act; and the virtue of humility will grow more by spending one day in a lowly and humble office or by wearing a worn-out and poor habit than by many days of bare desires. Every day we find by experience that someone has a repugnance to do one or other of the ordinary mortifications that we do, and the second day he does it without feeling any difficulty, whereas before he had many desires of doing the same and they were not enough to overcome the difficulty. For the same reason also the Society practises public penances, as we read that many holy men practised them; for once one of these penances is done, the doer becomes master of himself to do other things that formerly were difficult. Add to this what theologians say, that the interior act, when accompanied by the exterior, is commonly more intense and effectual. Thus in every way it is a great help towards gaining the virtue of humility to exercise ourselves exteriorly in lowly and humble acts.

And by the same reasons and causes whereby a virtue is gained, it is preserved and augmented. As exterior prac-

tice is necessary to gain the virtue of humility, it is also necessary to preserve and augment it. Hence it follows that this exercise is very important for all, not only for beginners, but also for proficients, and very advanced proficients, as we said elsewhere, treating of mortification. And so our Father in his Constitutions and Rules greatly commends it to all. "It will be a very special help to do with all possible devotion those lowly offices in which humility and charity are more exercised." And elsewhere he says: "They ought to forestall temptations by their contraries; thus if one finds himself inclined to pride, he should practise himself in lowly offices which he thinks will help to humble him, and so of other evil inclinations." And again: "As regards lowly and humble offices, they should willingly take up those to which they find greater repugnance, if they be ordered to do them." And so I say that these two things, humility and humiliation, ought to aid one another; and from interior humility, which consists in despising oneself and holding oneself of little account and desiring to be held of little account by others, should spring exterior humiliation, whereby a man shows himself without such as he reckons himself within; I mean to say that, as the humble man contemns himself in his own eyes and holds himself unworthy of any honor, such should be his exterior behavior and the actions that he does. Let him show in his actions the interior humility which he has within, choosing the lowest place, as Christ our Redeemer says. Let him not disdain to deal with little ones and people of low degree; let him rejoice in humble offices; and this same exterior humiliation, which springs from the interior, will swell the very fountain from which it takes its origin.

CHAPTER XXIV

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

PETER OF CLUNY relates that there was in the Carthusian Order a religious of holy and approved life, whom our Lord preserved so chaste, pure, and undefiled that he never suffered any illusion even in his dreams. As the hour of his death approached, and all the religious were assisting by his pillow, the prior, who was also there, commanded him to tell them what was the thing in which he thought he had most pleased our Lord in this life. He answered: "Father, it is a hard thing that you bid me, and I would nowise tell it if obedience did not oblige me thereto. From my childhood I have been much afflicted and persecuted by the devil; but according to the multitude of pains and tribulations that my heart has suffered, my soul has been refreshed by many consolations which Christ and the Virgin Mary, His Mother, have sent me. Being thus one day much afflicted and fatigued by great temptations of the devil, the sovereign Virgin appeared to me, and at her presence all the devils fled and all their temptations ceased. After having consoled and encouraged me to persevere and go on in virtue and perfection, she said to me: 'And that thou mayest do that the better, I will tell thee in particular, out of the treasures of my Son, three manners or practices of humility, by exercising which thou wilt greatly please God and vanquish thine enemy. They are that thou shouldst humble thyself always in these three things: in thy diet, in thy dress, and in the duties that thou dost. Thus in eating thou shouldst desire and contrive to get the cheapest foods; in dress, the poorest and coarsest habit; and in duties seek ever the lowliest and most humble, taking it for a great honor and gain to be busied always in the meanest and most abject offices, which others disdain and shun.'

So saying, she disappeared, and left imprinted on my heart the virtue and efficacy of these words, to do henceforth according as she had taught me, and thereby I felt in my soul great improvement."

Cassian relates of the Abbot Pinufius that, being a monk of Egypt and abbot of his monastery, esteemed and honored by his monks as a father and master for his venerable white hair and admirable life, he took it ill to receive such honor and desired to see himself humbled and forgotten. So one night he stole out of his monastery and, putting on a secular dress, he set out for the monastery of Pacomius, which was at a great distance from his own, and famous at that time for rigor and fervor of holiness. His object was that, not being known, they might treat him as a novice and make little of him. So he stood at the gate many days, humbly begging the habit, prostrating himself and kneeling before all the monks. Then they purposely made game of him and insulted him, saying that after having had his fill of enjoying the world, in old age he came to the service of God, where it was plain that he came more out of necessity and to get his livelihood than out of desire of the divine service. At last they received him, giving him charge of the garden of the monastery and assigning another for his superior, whom he was to obey in all things. Doing his office with great exactitude and humility, he contrived to do all that the rest refused, which was the most troublesome work of the house; and not content with what he did in the daytime, he used to get up secretly at night and put in order the things of the house—all he could without being seen—so that in the morning everybody wondered, not knowing who had done it. So he spent three years, very well satisfied with the fine occasion that he had in hand to work and be made little of, which was what he had so much desired. But his monks deeply felt the absence of their father, and some of them went out to seek him in divers places. When they had now lost all hope of

finding him, at the end of three years, one of Pinufius' monks, passing by the monastery of Pacomius, with very little thought of finding him, recognized the saint after all spreading dung on the soil. He threw himself at his feet: the beholders were much astonished thereat; but when they came to know who he was by the fame that reached their ears of him and his doings, they begged his pardon. The holy old man wept over his misfortune in having been discovered by the envy of the devil, and losing the treasure that he had found there. They carried him off then by force and welcomed him with joy in his own monastery, and from that time kept good watch over him very diligently. But in that they were no match for him, so that he failed not to get out another night—such was the great desire that he had of being despised and unknown and his relish and taste for that humble life which he had led in the other monastery. So by prearrangement he took ship for Palestine, which was a long way off, and doing so he came to land near the monastery of Cassian. But our Lord, Who is careful to exalt the humble, ordained it so that he was discovered by other monks of his own, who had come to visit the Holy Places; and hereby it came about that the holy man's reputation went up still higher.

In the lives of the Fathers there is a story of a monk who had lived a long time in the desert in solitude in great penance and prayer. There came to him one day an idea that he ought by this time to be perfect. So he put himself in prayer and made this request to God: "Lord, show me what is wanting in me to perfection." God wishing to teach him humbler thoughts, he heard a voice which told him: "Go to such and such a person"—he was a man who kept swine—"and do what he tells you." At the same time it was made known by revelation to the other that this solitary was coming to speak to him, and that he should tell him to take the whip and keep the swine. The old solitary came and, after saluting him, said: "I greatly desire to

serve God; tell me in charity what I am to do to that end." He asked him: "Will you do what I tell you?" The old man answered Yes; whereupon he said to him: "Take this whip, and go keep the pigs." He obeyed, because he greatly desired to serve God and gain what was wanting in him to perfection. And the good old man went with his whip keeping swine; and those who knew him—and there were many, so great was the fame of his sanctity in that country—seeing him keeping swine, said: "Have you seen that old solitary, about whom we have heard tell of so many things, how he has gone off his head and taken to keeping pigs? Surely his long fasts and great penance must have dried up his brain, and he has gone mad." The old man, who heard these things said, bore them with great patience and humility, and so went on for several days. And God, seeing his humility and with what good will he bore these affronts and words of blame, bade him afresh go back to his place.

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a holy bishop who abandoned his bishopric and his honorable estate and came alone to the holy city of Jerusalem, desiring to be made little of, because nobody knew him there. So he set himself down, shabbily dressed, as a day laborer at the public works, supporting himself by his labor. There was there a count named Ephaem, a pious and prudent man, who had the charge of repairing the public buildings of the city. He at several times saw the holy bishop sleeping on the ground, and saw a pillar of fire rising up from him and reaching to heaven. At this he was much astonished, to see a man so poor and begrimed with the dust of the buildings, with his hair and beard grown long, and living in such a mean and contemptible occupation. At last one day he could no longer contain himself, but took the man apart and asked him who he was. The saint replied that he was one of the poor of the town, and spent his life in that labor to have wherewith to keep himself. The count

was not satisfied with this answer, God so desiring to honor His servant by discovering his humility. So the count asked him again and again who he was, with much urgency, till he was forced to discover himself. And so he told him that he would discover himself under two conditions—first, that while he lived nothing of all that he said should be made public; the second, that he was not to ask his name. It was agreed, and he discovered to him that he was a bishop, and that to escape honor and consideration he had taken flight here.

St. John Climacus tells of a leading citizen of Alexandria, who came to be received into a monastery. The abbot, judging by his look and other appearances that he was a rough-tempered man, haughty and puffed up with the vanity of the world, said to him: "If you really are determined to take upon yourself the yoke of Christ, you must let yourself be exercised in the labors of obedience." He answered that, like the iron in the hands of the blacksmith, submissive to anything that he liked to do with it, "so, Father, I submit to whatever you shall command me." "I wish, then," said the abbot, "that you station yourself at the gate of the monastery, and throw yourself at the feet of all who come in and go out, and tell them to pray to God for you, for you are a great sinner." He fulfilled this obedience right well. And after he had been seven years at this exercise and had gained great humility thereby, the abbot wished to receive him into the monastery in company with the others, and ordain him as one who deserved that honor. But he, employing many intercessors, and among them St. John Climacus himself, prevailed upon the superior to leave him in the same place and exercise which he had held hitherto, until he should finish his course; and this he said with the air of one signifying or conjecturing that now his last hour was at hand. And so it was, for some days after this the Lord took him to Himself. And seven days afterwards he took with him the porter of the mon-

astery, to whom he had promised in his lifetime that, if after his death he enjoyed any favor with God, he would arrange for him to be his companion very shortly, and so it was. The same saint says that, when he was alive and was practising this exercise of humility, he asked him what he was busy thinking about at that time, and he answered that his practice was to hold himself unworthy of the company of the monastery and of the society and sight of the fathers, or even to lift up his eyes to look at them.

It is related in the Lives of the Fathers that the Abbot John used to tell a story of a philosopher who had a disciple who committed a fault; whereupon his master said to him: "I will not pardon you unless you bear the harsh language of others for three years." He did so, and then came for his pardon; and the philosopher said to him once more: "I give you no pardon unless for three years more you give money to those who use harsh language to you." He did so, and then the master pardoned him and said to him: "Now you may go to Athens to learn wisdom." He went to Athens, and there he encountered a philosopher whose practice it was to pour out harsh language upon all freshmen who attended his lectures, to see whether they had patience. He used such language to this newcomer, and the latter began to laugh. He said to him: "How is it that you laugh when I use this harsh language to you?" He answered: "For three years I have been making gifts to those who used harsh language to me; and now that I have found a man who will use such language to me for nothing, what would you but that I should laugh?" Thereupon the philosopher said to him: "Come in, for you are a good subject for wisdom." Whence the Abbot John drew the conclusion that patience is the portal of wisdom.

Father Maffeus, in the life that he writes of our blessed Father Ignatius, relates how one day our Father was going on pilgrimage from Venice to Padua along with James Lainez, in garments very old and patched. A shepherd boy

caught sight of them, came near, and began to laugh and make fun of them. Our Father very cheerfully stopped short and, when his companion asked him why he did not go on and leave this youngster behind, he answered: "Why should we deprive this child of this amusement and occasion of mirth that has come in his way?" So he stood at ease, that the youngster might have his fill of staring and laughing and joking—he meanwhile getting more satisfaction out of this scorn than worldly people do out of honors and marks of respect.

Of our Father Francis Borgia it is recounted in his Life that he went once on a journey with Father Bustamante for his companion. They came to an inn, where all the sleeping accommodation consisted of a narrow room with two separate mattresses stuffed with straw. The fathers went to bed, and Father Bustamante, who was old and suffering from asthma, did nothing all night long but cough and spit, and thinking that he was spitting against the wall, it so happened by chance that he was spitting on Father Francis, and many times on his face. The father never spoke a word, nor changed his position, nor got out of the way for that. In the morning, when Father Bustamante saw by daylight what he had done, he was horrified and greatly confused; and Father Francis no less joyful and content; and to console him he said: "Be not distressed at this, father, for I do assure you that there was no place in the room more worthy of being spat upon than my person."

CHAPTER XXV

Of the Exercise of Humility That We Have in Religion

ONE of the reasons that St. Basil assigns for preferring the life of a monk living in community to that of a hermit is that a solitary life, besides being dangerous, is not so

available as monastic life for the gaining of ordinary virtues, since it presents no opportunity for their exercise. How is he to be exercised in humility who has no one before whom he can humble himself? Or in charity and mercy, since he has no dealings with another? Or, again, in patience, when there is none to resist his will? But a religious living in community is in a position of advantage for the gaining of all necessary virtues, having great occasion to exercise himself in them all: in humility, because he has those to whom he should subject himself and humble himself before them; in charity, because he has those towards whom he must practise it; in patience, because in dealing with so many brethren there is plenty of occasion for that; and so of the other virtues. We religious owe much gratitude to the Lord for the favor He has done us in drawing us to religion, which affords such opportunity and many means for obtaining virtue—which is, in fact, a school of perfection.

We of the Society are particularly obliged in this matter because, besides the common means, we have given us very special means for obtaining humility in our Rules and Constitutions. If we keep our rules well, we shall be very humble, because in them we find very sufficient exercise of humility. Such is the rule, so important in the Society, of opening our entire conscience to our superior, giving him an account of all our temptations, passions, and evil inclinations, and of all our defects and miseries. And though it is true that this rule was laid down for other purposes, nevertheless it is doubtless a great exercise of humility. Such again is the rule which says: "For their greater advancement in spirit and especially for their greater subjection and self-humiliation, all must be content to have all their errors and faults, and whatever may be noted or observed in them, made known to their superiors by anyone whoever has knowledge of them out of confession." Notice the reason given—"for their greater subjection and self-

humiliation;" that is just what we are saying. If you desire to gain true humility, you must rejoice in all your faults' being made known to your superiors. Thus a good and humble religious goes of himself to tell his faults to his superior and ask a penance for them, and takes care to be himself the first person from whom the superior shall know his faults.

And there is not only this, but a much greater exercise of humility in the Society, in that you tell your faults publicly before all, that they may disparage you and set small store by you, since that is the end of this exercise of humility—not that they may take you for a humble and mortified man, for that would be no act of humility, but of pride. In the same spirit you have to take and desire reprehensions, not only in private and secret, but publicly before all; and so far as in you lies you should rejoice that this be done in right-down good earnest, and that all should think accordingly and take you for what you are as described. And generally the use and practice of all the exterior penances and mortifications that are practised in the Society aids much to the gaining and keeping of true humility, such as kissing feet, eating under the table or on your knees, prostrating at the door of the refectory, and the like. If these things are done in the spirit in which they ought to be done, they will be very profitable for advancement in true humility and for the preservation of the same. When you take your dinner sitting on the ground, you should do this with an inward recognition of yourself as one who deserves not to sit at table with your brethren. When you kiss feet, own that you do not deserve to kiss the ground on which they walk. When you prostrate, own that you deserve that all should tread on you. And you should wish and desire that all should think so.

It should be a very good thing when one does these acts of mortification to set one's mind interiorly on these considerations, as did that holy monk, mentioned in the for-

mer chapter, who stood seven years at the gate of the monastery; for in this way they will be very profitable to us and engender humility in our heart. But if you do these things in a spiritless way and outwardly only, there will be little profit in them, because, as St. Paul says: *Bodily performance profiteth little* (I Tim. iv. 8), that is to say, doing things for mere form and custom's sake, without any effort to gain the end intended thereby. If after kissing your brothers' feet and prostrating for all to tread on you, you give vent to harsh and rude words, the two performances do not agree one with the other; that is a sign that the first was pure ceremony and hypocrisy.

These and many other exercises of humility we have in our Society by rule and constitution. I have chosen to bring them to memory here, though we drew attention to them before for another purpose, that we may consider them, and therein may be our principal practice of humility; because the matter wherein a religious should chiefly practise and display virtue and mortification is that which is obligatory by the rules and constitutions of his order, since therein consists our advancement and perfection. If you have not virtue enough to put into execution the acts of virtue and mortification to which your rule and institute obliges you, you should reckon nothing of any virtue that you have. We can say the like of any Christian, that the chief thing for which he needs humility and mortification is for keeping the law of God; if he has not enough for that, little or nothing will anything else profit him. If he has not humility and mortification enough to confess a thing of which he is ashamed, but for shame, or rather I should say for pride, leaves it out, and so breaks so important a commandment, what will profit him all that he has and does, seeing that this omission alone is enough for his damnation? So we may say with due proportion of the religious. If you have not humility enough to open your conscience to your superior and fulfil such an important rule as that,

what will humility and mortification serve you? If you cannot suffer another to acquaint the superior of your fault that he may correct you, where is your humility? If you have not humility enough to receive rebuke and penance, to do a lowly and humble duty, to be incorporated in the grade in which the Society shall choose to put you, where is the good of your humility and indifference, and for what other end do superiors ask those virtues of you? In this way the religious may specify the particular points of his rule, and every man the particular requirements of his state and office.

CHAPTER XXVI

That We Must Be on Our Guard against Uttering Words That May Redound to Our Praise

THE saints and masters of spiritual life, Basil, Gregory, Bernard, and others, advise us carefully to beware of uttering words that may redound to our own praise and credit, according to holy Toby's advice to his son: *Never allow pride to reign in thy thoughts, or in thy speech* (Tob. iv. 14). The Apostle had said sundry great things of himself, because so it was expedient for his hearers and for the greater glory of God; and he might have said things still greater, since he had been rapt to the third heaven, where he saw and understood more than tongue can utter, but he refrained from saying them, as he says, *lest anyone should think of me more than there is and is seen in me* (II Cor. xii. 6). "Oh, how well said," cries St. Bernard, "is that *I refrain now from that*. The proud and arrogant man refrains from none of these things; he lets pass no occasion for showing off any good point that he has about him, but rather sometimes he piles on additions and says more than is true, to be more regarded and valued the more. It is only the truly humble man who lets slip these

occasions and, that they may not take him for more than he is, tries to cover up what he really is." And going down to particulars he says: "Never say anything whence you may appear more learned, or more religious, or a man of prayer"—and, generally, anything that may redound to your praise in any manner whatsoever. Always beware of saying that, since it is a very dangerous thing, although you might say it with much truth and even with edification, and you fancy you say it for the good and profit of another; since it concerns you, that is enough for your not saying it. You should always be very cautious on this point, not to lose thereby the good that you may possibly have done.

St. Bonaventure says: "Never utter words that may give the impression that you have knowledge, ability, or genius beyond the ordinary; nor again say anything whence others may conclude that you were somebody of consequence there in the world." It looks very bad in a religious to vaunt himself of the nobility or rank of his people, since all these details of lineage and rank are a mere puff of wind. Someone has well said: "What is nobility good for? To despise it," as we despise riches. All that counts here in religion is virtue and humility. That it is that is valued; whatever you were or were not in the world, it is all smoke. Whoever in religion plumes himself on these things or makes account of them, shows well his vanity and want of spiritual sense; such a one has not left nor spurned the world. St. Basil says: "He who has been born with a new birth, and has contracted a spiritual and divine relationship with God and received power to be His son, is ashamed of his other carnal parentage and forgets it."

In any man whatsoever, words of self-praise sound bad; and so the proverb says: "Praise is a cheap article in your own mouth." And the Wise Man says it better: *Let another praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips* (Prov. xxvii. 2). But in the mouth of a reli-

gious such words sound still worse, as being contrary to his profession; and so from what he expected to enhance his reputation, there ensues a loss of reputation and credit. St. Ambrose on those words of the prophet, *Behold my lowliness and rescue me* (Psalm cxviii. 153), says: "Though a person be sickly, poor, and of low condition, if he is not proud and makes no attempt to set himself above anyone, he gets to be loved and prized for his humility; that stands in stead of everything." And, contrariwise, though a man be very rich, noble, and powerful, and though he be a great scholar and of high parts and abilities, yet if he boasts and uplifts himself therein, he thereby lessens and lowers himself and comes to be despised and discredited because he comes to be accounted proud.

History tells of the Abbot Arsenius that, though in the world he had been so illustrious and eminent in letters—he had been tutor to Arcadius and Honorius, sons of the Emperor Theodosius, who were themselves afterwards emperors—nevertheless, from the time he became a monk, no one ever heard a word from him redolent of such grandeur or conveying the impression that he was a man of letters; rather he conversed and dealt with the other monks with as much humility and plainness as though he had no acquaintance with letters; and he questioned the simplest monks on matters of spirituality, saying that in that highest of sciences he was not worthy to be their disciple. And of the blessed St. Jerome it is said in his Life that, though he was of very noble birth, there is not a word in his writings to give any hint of the same.

St. Bonaventure gives another excellent reason. Know, he says, that there can be hardly anything in you good and worthy of praise, but that it will shine through to others, and they will understand and know it. If you are silent and hide it, you will be well liked and more worthy of praise, as well for your good quality as for your trying to hide it; but if you display it and make a brave show of it,

they will make game of you; and where they were ready to take edification from you and value you, they will come to disparage and make light of you. Virtue in this is like musk; the more you hide it, the more will it show itself by the perfume that it gives out; whereas if you carry it about uncovered, it will presently lose its scent.

St. Gregory relates how a holy abbot named Eleutherius went once on a journey, and coming to a monastery of nuns was hospitably received in a certain house where dwelt a youth much tormented by the devil, who was his companion that night. Morning came, and the nuns asked if anything had happened to the youth that night. He answered, No. Then they told him that he was grievously tormented by the devil every night and begged him earnestly to take him with him to his monastery. The old man granted their request; and when he had been with him in the community for some time without the old enemy's daring to approach, the old man was touched with some inordinate joy and vain satisfaction over the youth's recovery; and in conversation with his monks he said: "The devil was playing the fool, brethren, with those nuns, tormenting the youth; but now that he has come to a monastery of the servants of God, he has not dared to come near him." As he said these words, of a sudden before them all the youth was tormented by the devil. At seeing it, the old man began to weep bitterly, seeing that his vainglory had been the cause of this mishap; and by way of consoling the monks he told them that none of them should have a mouthful to eat until they had obtained the recovery of that youth. They all prostrated in prayer and did not rise from it until the sick man was cured. Hence will be seen how God abhors any words that contain any savor of self-praise, though spoken only in jest, by way of a pleasant joke, as it seems that this saint said them.

CHAPTER XXVII

How We Should Exercise Ourselves at Meditation in the Second Degree of Humility

OUR Father in his Constitutions lays down the rule that, "as worldly men love and desire with all earnestness honors, fame, and the reputation of a great name on earth, so they who are advancing in spirit and following Christ our Lord in good earnest, love and intensely desire just the opposite, desiring to suffer injuries, false witnesses, insults, and to be held and accounted fools, without, however, themselves giving any occasion therefore, because they wish in some measure to imitate Christ our Lord." And he commands that all who are about to enter the Society should first be asked if they have such desires. It certainly seems a stiff thing for a novice who has just left the world and comes "raw bleeding," as they say, to be examined by a rule so strait and of such perfection as this. There is seen the great perfection which our institute requires; it looks for men truly detached from self and entirely dead to the world. But because this is difficult and requires high perfection, our Father goes on to say that if anyone, through our human weakness and misery, does not feel in himself such inflamed desires, he should be asked if he has at least a desire of having them; and thereupon and in this disposition to bear in patience the like occasions when they offer, he will do; for this is a good disposition for learning and making progress. It is enough for a learner to start with a desire to know his trade and to apply himself to it; in that way he will get on with it. Religion is a school of perfection; come in with this desire, and by the grace of the Lord you will go out with what you desire.

Herewith, then, let us commence this exercise and proceed, taking it little by little. You say that you feel in you no desires to be undervalued and made small account

of. Begin there to exercise yourself in meditation on this virtue of humility; say with the prophet: *My soul hath desired to desire thy righteous ways at all times* (Psalm cxiii. 20). O Lord, how far I see myself removed from having those lively and inflamed desires which those great saints and truly humble men had of being undervalued by the world! I should much wish to attain at least to having a desire of having those desires; I desire to desire that. You are going on well so far; that is a good beginning and disposition for gaining your end. Insist and persevere therein in your meditation; beg of the Lord that your heart may be softened, and occupy yourself therein for several days, since these desires are very pleasing to the Lord and He listens to them with very good will, as the prophet says: *The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor, and the readiness of their heart, O Lord, thou hast listened to* (Psalm ix. 38). Soon God will give you a desire to suffer something for His love and to do some penance for your sins; and when He gives it to you, in what can you better fulfil this desire of suffering, and in what can you do greater penance, than in being undervalued and made small account of in retribution for your sins? As David said, when Semei cursed and insulted him: *Let him alone, perchance the Lord will be pleased to accept these insults and reproaches in atonement for my sins, and that will be a great gain to me* (II Kings xvi. 10).

When the Lord has done you this favor that you desire to be undervalued and rated for little in order to be like Christ and imitate Him, you must not fancy that the business is all done and that you have gained the virtue of humility; rather you are then to reckon that you have to begin afresh to plant and consolidate the virtue in your soul. You must take care not to pass lightly over these desires, but stay on them a long time in your meditation until they become efficacious enough to pass into deeds. And when you have got so far that you think you bear

well the occasions of humiliation that come in your way, observe that in the same outward act there are many degrees and steps to mount to arrive at the perfection of humility. First you must practise yourself in bearing with patience all the occasions that offer, tending to your loss of honor and reputation; therein you will find occupation for some time, quite possibly for a long time. Then you must go further, and not stop or rest until you come to rejoice under contempt and insult, and feel therein as much satisfaction as worldly people do in all the honors, riches, and pleasures there are in the world, according to that saying of the prophet: *I have delighted in the way of thy commandments as in all riches* (Psalm cxviii. 14). When we desire a thing in good earnest, we naturally rejoice at getting it: if our desire is great, we greatly rejoice; if little, little. Take this, then, for a sign to see if you desire to be made small account of and if you are growing in the virtue of humility. And the same in other virtues.

That we may profit more by this means of meditation and thereby imprint virtue more deeply on our heart, we should descend to particular cases and difficulties that may occur, animating ourselves and bringing ourselves to the point as though they were actually present, insisting and coming to a determination thereupon, until there is no obstacle in the way, but the road is clear. In this manner vice is gradually uprooted, and virtue sinks into the innermost recesses of the heart, and perfection grows. We find a good comparison to this effect in what goldsmiths do to refine gold. They melt it in the crucible, and when it is melted they throw in a grain of corrosive sublimate, and the gold begins to boil and bubble with great fury till it has consumed all the sublimate, and when it has consumed it, the gold is at rest. Then the goldsmith throws in another grain of sublimate, and the gold once more bubbles and boils, but not with such fury as the first time; and when the sublimate is consumed, the gold is still. A third time he throws in a

grain of sublimate, and again the gold begins to bubble, but quietly. When for the fourth time he throws in a little sublimate, the gold makes no noise over the sublimate, but behaves as though they had thrown in nothing, because it is now refined and purified, and that is a sign thereof. Now this is what we have to do at meditation. Throw in a grain of sublimate, imagining some case of mortification and humiliation to present itself to you; and if you take fright and are troubled, stay thereon until by the heat of prayer this grain of sublimate is consumed, and you pluck up courage to meet that occasion, and remain quiet and tranquil in face of it. Again another day throw in another grain of sublimate, imagining another awkward occurrence involving much mortification and humiliation; and if still there is a bubbling and boiling and nature is troubled, rest thereupon until you exhaust the difficulty and feel at ease about it. Another and another time throw in another grain; and when the sublimate makes in you no noise nor trouble, but whatever turns up and comes before your consideration, you can regard it with much peace and tranquillity, then the gold is refined and purified; that is a sign of your having gained the perfection of the virtue.

CHAPTER XXVIII

How We Are to Make the Particular Examen on the Virtue of Humility

THE particular examen, as we have said in its place, should always be made on one thing alone because in that way it is a more efficacious means and of greater effect than if we made it on many things together, and therefore it is called particular because it is made on one thing alone. This is of so much importance that even with one vice or one virtue oftentimes, and indeed most ordinarily, it is necessary to take it by parts, and little by little, to

gain what is desired. So also with this virtue: if you desire to apply your particular examen to the rooting out of pride from your heart and the gaining of the virtue of humility, you must not take it in general, since pride and humility include a great deal; and if you take it thus in the lump and in general—not to be proud in anything, but humble in all—that is a wide-embracing examen and includes more than if you took it on two or three things together, and so you will get no forwarder; you ought to have taken it little by little, by parts. See where it is that you most of all feel a want of humility and the hold that pride has on you, and begin there; and when you have done with one detail, take to heart another and then another, and in this way little by little you will go on rooting out from you the vice of pride and gaining the virtue of humility. These things, therefore, we will now proceed to divide and dismember, that so we may be able to make better and more profitably our particular examen on the virtue of humility.

Be it the first thing not to utter words that may turn to our own praise and commendation. As this desire of honor and esteem is so natural to us and so rooted in our heart, it comes on to our tongue, almost without our thinking or noticing it, to say words that may redound to our praise either directly or indirectly: *for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh* (Luke vi. 45). When any creditable action comes up in conversation, we at once seek to have had our part in it. “I happened to be there; indeed, it was through me that the thing turned out as it did; if it had not been for me, and so forth.” I’ll warrant that if the thing had gone otherwise, though you had been there and had your part in it, you would have found not a word to say. Of this sort are many words that often escape us without our seeing their bearing until we have said them. Thus it will be a very good thing to make our particular examen on this matter, that, by having an eye to this danger and forming a good habit, we may get rid of the evil and almost continual habit that we have of acting otherwise.

The second thing is what St. Basil advises us, and also Saints Jerome, Augustine, and Bernard, not to listen willingly to another praising and speaking well of us, for in this also there is great danger. St. Ambrose says that, when the devil cannot upset us by pusillanimity and discouragement, he aims at our overthrow by presumption and pride; and when he cannot compass our ruin by insults showered upon us, he tries to get people to honor and praise us, to effect our overthrow in that way. Of the blessed St. Pacomius it is related in his Life that he used to go out of the monastery to go to more solitary places to pray; and when he returned, often there came devils, and like the coming of a great army with its commander and a great escort, they went before him making a great din; and as it were to make room and remove obstacles they cried: "Stand aside, stand aside; make room, make room; let the saint come, let the servant of God come," to see if they could thereby move him to elation and pride; and he laughed and made game of them. Do you the like when you hear yourself praised; and when thoughts of your high reputation occur to you, make account that you hear the devil saying these things and laugh and make game of him, and so you will deliver yourself from this temptation. St. John Climacus relates a very notable thing. He says that once the devil discovered to a monk the bad thoughts wherewith he assailed another to the end that, when the person so assailed heard from the other's mouth what was passing in his heart, he might take him for a prophet and praise him for a saint, and so the man might become proud. Hence we see how much store the devil sets by pride and vain complacency arising in us, since he tries to set it up by so many arts and stratagems. And so says St. Jerome: "Beware of the Sirens of the sea, that enchant men and rob them of their judgment." So sweet and pleasant in our ears is the music of human praise that no Sirens are such enchanters or so potent to make a man lose his head. Therefore it is

necessary for us to make ourselves deaf and stop our ears. St. John Climacus says that, when people praise us, we should set before our eyes our sins and find ourselves unworthy of the praises given us, and thus we shall draw from them more humility and confusion. Let this, then, be the second thing on which we may make particular examen, not to rejoice when another praises you and speaks well of you. And with this there may be conjoined the practice of rejoicing when they praise and speak well of another, which is another detail of much importance; and when you find any sentiment or movement of envy at their praising and speaking well of another, or any complacency or vain satisfaction when they speak well of yourself, to mark it as a fault.

The third thing that we may make particular examen on is not to do anything to be seen or esteemed by men, according to the warning of Christ our Redeemer in the Gospel. *See to it that ye do not your good works before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye shall have no reward from your Father who is in heaven* (Matt. vi. 1). This is a very profitable examen, and may be divided into many parts. First it may be made on not doing things on mere human motives, and afterwards on doing them purely for God, and after that on doing them right down well, as one working in presence of God and serving God and not men, until we come to do our actions in such manner as to seem in them to be rather loving than working, as we said at length in the treatise of the rectitude and purity of intention that we ought to have in our actions.

The fourth thing on which we can make particular examen is never to excuse ourselves; for that also comes of pride, whereby in committing a fault or having a fault told us, we at once seek an excuse and unconsciously throw one excuse on the top of another; and are ready even to find an excuse for having excused ourselves, *to excuse excuses in sins* (*ad excusandas excusationes in peccatis*, Psalm cxi.

4). St. Gregory on those words of Job: *If in human fashion I have hidden my sin, and concealed in the fold of my vest my evil doing* (Job xxxi. 33), makes good reflection on this phrase, *in human fashion*. He says it is just like man to seek to gloss over and excuse his sin, that bad habit being in our blood and an inheritance from our first parents. The first man, on sinning, at once went to hide himself among the trees of Paradise; and when God reproved him for his disobedience, he thereupon threw the blame on his wife: *The woman that thou gavest me for companion made me eat* (Gen. iii. 12). The woman, to excuse herself, threw the blame on the serpent: *The serpent deceived me and I ate*. God asked them about their sin, that knowing it and confessing it they might obtain His pardon. So, says St. Gregory, He did not ask the serpent, for that creature He was not to pardon. But they, instead of humbling themselves and acknowledging their sin in order to obtain pardon, increased it and made it greater by excusing it and even trying in some way to throw the blame on God. "Lord, the woman Thou gavest me was the cause of this;" as if he would say: "If Thou hadst not given me her for a companion, I should have done nothing of the sort." "The serpent that Thou didst create and let enter into Paradise was what deceived me. If Thou hadst not let it come in here, I should not have sinned." St. Gregory says that, after they had heard from the mouth of the serpent that they should be like unto God, now that they could not be like Him in Godhead, they sought to make Him like themselves in fault, and so the fault that they had committed they made greater by defending it. We, then, as children of such parents, in fact as men, lie under this infirmity, this vice and evil habit, that, when we are reproved for any fault, we at once seek to cloak it over with excuses, as under so many leaves and branches. And sometimes, not content with excusing ourselves, we seek to throw the blame on others.

A saint (Peter Damian) compares those who excuse themselves to a hedgehog, that, when it feels that people want to catch or touch it, with the greatest nimbleness tucks in its head and feet and makes itself into a ball surrounded on all sides with pricks, so that you cannot seize or touch it without first pricking yourself—*ut prius videas sanguinem tuum quam corpus suum*. In this way, says the saint, those are who excuse themselves. If you seek to touch them and tell them the fault they have committed, they at once defend themselves like the hedgehog. And sometimes they will prick you, giving you to understand that you also have need of correction: sometimes telling you that there is a rule that one should not reprove another; at other times saying that others have committed greater faults, and no notice taken. Come to touch the hedgehog, and you will see if it pricks. All this springs from our excessive pride, in that we are unwilling to have our faults known or to be taken for men who have their defects, and we are more sorry for our faults' being known and the loss of credit that we incur thereby than for having committed them, and thus we try to cloak them over and excuse them as far as we can.

And there are persons so unmortified on this point that, even before anything is said to them, they take the first step and excuse themselves, and seek to give a reason for what may be objected against them: if they did this, it was for that reason; and if they did the other, it was for that other reason. Who is pricking you now, that you rear up thus? It is the goad and spur of pride that you have within the very marrow of your constitution, that pricks you and makes you rear up at this even before the time. If, then, you feel in yourself this vice and evil habit, it will be well to make the particular examen thereon until you cease to have any desire to cloak over your fault, but rather rejoice, now that you have committed it, that they take you for a person who has his faults, in reparation and satisfaction

for it. And even though you have not committed the fault, and are reprov'd for it, do not excuse yourself; because when the superior wants to know the motive and cause that you had for doing that, he will know how to inquire; and haply he knows already, but wants to test your humility, and see how you take rebuke and admonition.

Fifthly, it is also a good examen to cut short and retrench thoughts of pride. A man is so proud and so vain that there occur to him many vain and proud thoughts, imagining himself in high posts and ministries to correspond; and there you find yourself preaching in your native place very taking sermons, and sermons, so you imagine, productive of much good; there you are again lecturing, or maintaining theses with great applause of the audience, and the like things. All this comes of the great pride that is seated in us, sprouting out and bursting forth in these thoughts. Thus it makes an excellent particular examen to abridge and cut short at once these vain and ambitious thoughts, as you would stop and cut short at once impure thoughts and rash judgments, and thoughts of any other vice whereby one is molested.

Sixthly, it will be also a good examen to hold all others for our superiors, as the rule tells us. Let us incite ourselves to humility by contriving and desiring to give preference to others, reckoning them all in our mind as if they were our superiors and externally showing all respect and reverence that the condition of each admits of, with religious plainness and simplicity, which advice is taken from the Apostle (Phil. ii. 3; Rom. xii. 10). Although externally deference must be paid according to variety of status and persons, yet in point of true humility and the interior attitude of our soul, our Father wishes that, as he applies the word "least" to this Society and religious order, so each member of it should take himself for the least of all and hold all the rest for his superiors and betters. This, then, will be a very good and profitable examen, provided that it

be not a mere speculative view, but in practice and behavior you conduct yourself to all with the same humility and respect as if they were your superiors. If you took such and such a person for your superior, you would not take liberties in talking to him, nor be rough with him, much less use words that might grieve or mortify him, nor would you be so ready to pass judgment on him, nor resent his dealing or speaking with you in this way or that. So all these things you must note and mark down as faults, when you make examen on this point.

The seventh thing on which we may make particular examen in this matter is to take well all occasions of humility that come in our way. You are apt to resent it when another speaks to you a scornful word, and when they give you orders in peremptory and imperious tones, or when it looks as though they did not make so much account of you as of others. Make your examen on taking well these and the like occasions that offer, occasions that may go to putting you down. This examen is one of the most proper and profitable that we can make to gain the virtue of humility; for besides our thereby going in readiness to meet all that may come in our way and must be met day by day, we may also in this examen grow and mount up by those three degrees of virtue that we have already stated. First you may make your examen on bearing all these things with patience; afterwards on bearing them with readiness and ease, until you come not to dwell on the thing or make any account of it; after that you may make it on bearing them with joy, and delighting in your own humiliation, in which we have said the perfection of humility consists.

The eighth thing on which one may make one's particular examen in this and other matters is to do so many acts and practices of humility (or other virtue on which the examen is made), as well interior as exterior, bringing oneself to act therein so many times in the morning and so many times in the afternoon, beginning with fewer acts and

gradually increasing them until one is quite habituated and accustomed to this virtue. In this way, by dividing one's enemies and taking each by itself, self-conquest is better effected and the end desired gained in a shorter time.

CHAPTER XXIX

How Humility Is Compatible with Seeking to Be Regarded and Esteemed by Men

THERE is a doubt that often strikes one about humility, the solution of which is of importance for us to know how to behave in regard of it. We usually say, and it is the common doctrine of the saints, that we should desire to be depreciated, run down, little valued, and made small account of. A difficulty at once arises on the other side: How can we work with profit to our neighbors if they despise us and hold us of small account? Surely for that end it is necessary to have authority with them, and that they should have a good opinion and esteem of us; hence it appears that it is no bad thing, but a good thing, to desire to be respected and regarded amongst men. This doubt is dealt with by the glorious Saints Basil, Gregory, and Bernard. And they answer it very well, saying that, though it is true that we should shun the honor and esteem of the world for the great danger there is in it, and on our part and in so far as it rests with us we should even desire to be despised and held of little account, yet for a certain good purpose of the greater service of God, it may be a lawful and holy thing to desire the honor and esteem of men. So says St. Bernard that, while it is true that on our part we should wish that others should know and feel about us what we know and feel about ourselves, and view us in the same light in which we view ourselves, yet often (he says) it is not advisable that they should know so much, and so it may be sometimes a lawful and holy thing in us to endeavor

that they may not know our faults, not to take any scandal thereby and be hindered in their spiritual advancement. But we need to understand this properly and proceed in the matter with circumspection and much spiritual wisdom, because these and the like truths, under color of truth, are apt to do great harm to some souls from their not knowing how to make use of them.

The same saints explain this doctrine well to us, that we may not take thence occasion to go wrong. St. Gregory says: Sometimes holy men are glad to enjoy the good opinion and esteem of men; that is, when they see it to be a necessary means for the advancement and spiritual help of their neighbors' souls. And this, says St. Gregory, is not rejoicing in one's own position and distinction, by in the fruit and profit of one's neighbor, which is a very different thing. It is one thing to love honor and human esteem for its own sake—dwelling thereupon for one's own satisfaction and with regard to oneself, at being great and distinguished in the opinion of men, and that is bad—and another thing to seek it as a means of producing fruit in souls, and that is not bad, but good. And in this way we may well desire the honor and esteem of the world and men's good opinion of us for the greater glory of God and for its being necessary for the edification of our neighbors and doing them good, for this is not seeking one's own honor and reputation, but the profit and good of one's neighbor and the greater glory of God. As in one who for health's sake takes a purgative draught, which he naturally dislikes, the seeking and taking of the draught is part of his love of health; so it is with human honor, which a good man shuns and disdains—he seeks and accepts it solely for its being in some particular case necessary or profitable for the service of God and the good of souls, in which case he may be said with truth not to wish or desire anything but the glory of God.

But let us see how it may be known whether a man takes delight in honor and the good opinion of men purely for the glory of God and the profit of his neighbor, or whether his delight turns on himself and his own honor and credit; for this is a very delicate question, and the whole point and difficulty of this business consists in this. To this St. Gregory replies: Our joy in honor and credit should be so purely for God that, were it not necessary for His greater glory and the good of our neighbor, we would not only not rejoice at it, but positively be pained. Thus our heart and desire, so far as in us lies, must ever incline to ignominy and contempt, and so, when we have an opportunity of that, we should ever embrace it heartily and rejoice therein, as people do when they get what they want. And as for honor and credit, we should desire and rejoice in it solely in so far as it is necessary for the edification of our neighbor, for the good of his soul, and the honor and glory of God.

Of our blessed Father Ignatius we read that he used to say that, if he let himself be carried away by the fervor of his desire, he would go through the streets naked and feathered and covered with mud, to be taken for a madman; but charity and the desire he had to be useful to his neighbor checked in him this great affection for humility and made him conduct himself with that authority and decorum that became his office and person. But his inclination and desire was to be despised and run down; and whenever an opportunity of humiliation occurred, he embraced it and even sought it in good earnest. By this, then, it will be known whether you rejoice in authority and good name for the good of souls and the glory of God or for your own sake and your own personal honor and authority. If, when an opportunity offers of humiliation and discredit, you embrace it in good earnest and heartily and are glad of it, then it is a good sign that, when the sermon or the business goes well and you are regarded and made much of on that account, you do not rejoice for your own honor

and reputation, but purely for the glory of God and the good of your neighbor ensuing therefrom. But if, when an opportunity of humiliation offers, you refuse it and do not take it well; and when it is not necessary for the profit of your neighbor, you none the less rejoice in the esteem and praises of men and go out of your way to get them, that is a sign that even on those other occasions your joy is for what touches yourself and your own honor and credit, and not purely for the glory of God and the spiritual profit of your neighbor.

Thus it is true that honor and the good opinion of men is not bad, but good, if we make a good use of it, and thus the desire of it may be lawful and holy, as when Father Francis Xavier went with a great retinue in state to visit the King of Bungo. Self-praise also may be good and holy, if it is done as it ought to be, as we see that St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians (II Cor. iv. 2), began to praise and recount grand things of himself, telling the great favors that the Lord had done him, and saying that he had worked harder than the other apostles, and beginning to relate the revelations that he had had, and raptures even to the third heaven. But this he did because it was then proper and necessary for the honor of God and the profit of his neighbors to whom he was writing, that so they might regard and venerate him for an apostle of Christ and receive his doctrine, and profit thereby. And he said these things with a heart that not only despised honor, but loved disparagement and dishonor for Jesus Christ's sake. For when it was not necessary for the good of his neighbor, he knew well how to disparage and abase himself, saying of himself that he was not worthy to be an apostle because he had persecuted the Church of God (I Cor. xv. 9), and calling himself a blasphemer and one born out of due time and the greatest of sinners (I Tim. i. 13-16); and when they offered him slights and insults, he was very well pleased and glad. Hearts such as this we may well trust to receive honor, and

sometimes say things that go to secure it, for they will never do these things without its being necessary for the greater glory of God; and then they do them without being contaminated thereby, as though they did them not, because they love not their own honor, but the honor of God and the good of souls.

But because it is very difficult to receive honor and not grow proud thereupon, or take therein any vain satisfaction or complacency, for this reason saints, fearing the great danger there is in honor and reputation, and dignities and high posts, shun all that sort of thing as far as they can; and used to go where they were not known or esteemed, and contrived to busy themselves in lowly and despicable occupations, because they saw that helped more to their spiritual profit and their preservation in humility, and that it was the safer way for them.

St. Francis used to allege a good reason. I am not a religious, he says, unless I take disgrace with the same cheerfulness of countenance and calm of soul as I take honor. If for the spiritual good of others I rejoice at the honor which they pay me when I preach or do other good works, wherein I put my soul into risk and danger of vanity, much more should I rejoice at my own spiritual good and the making safe of my own soul, of which I am more secure when they find fault with me. It is clear that we are more bound to rejoice in our own spiritual good and profit than in the good and profit of our neighbor, because well-ordered charity begins at home. If, then, you are glad of your neighbor's profit when the sermon or the business went well and brings you in praise and reputation, why are you not glad of your profit when, while you are doing all on your part, you are little thought of in consequence? For that is the better and safer situation for you. If you are glad when you have great talents to do great things for the good of others, why are you not glad of your own profit and increase in humility when God has given you no talent

for these things? If you rejoice in the enjoyment of robust and sound health to labor for others, why do you not rejoice when it is God's will that you should be sick and feeble, and good for nothing but to be thrust into a corner as a piece of useless furniture?—for that is what is to your advantage, and that will help you to be humble, and by that you will please God more than if you were a great preacher, because He wills it so.

Hence it will be seen how much they are mistaken who fix their eyes on worldly honor and reputation, under pretense that this is necessary for doing good to one's neighbor, and under that pretense desire honorable offices and high posts and all that carries authority and influence, and shun what is lowly and humble, thinking to lose authority thereby. There is a great mistake here, since a man loses authority and influence when he thinks to gain it; and when he thinks that he shall lose it, he will gain it. Some think that by a poor habit and an office or occupation that is lowly and humble they shall lose the good opinion that is necessary for dealing profitably with their neighbor. Herein their pride deceives them; rather hereby you will gain it, and by the contrary way, which you follow, you will lose it.

Our blessed Father Ignatius taught this very well. He said that a sense of true humility did more for the conversion of souls than a display of authority which had about it some savor and scent of the world. And so he not only practised this humility himself, but in sending others to labor in the vineyard of the Lord he taught them that, to succeed in great and arduous undertakings, it should always be their policy to take the road of humility and contempt of themselves, for their work would be quite safe if it were well grounded on this humility, and that is the way by which the Lord usually works great things. According to this policy, when he sent Fathers Francis Xavier and Simon Rodriguez to Portugal, he ordered them that on

arriving in that kingdom they should beg alms, and by poverty and self-abasement should open the gate to all the rest. And Fathers Salmeron and Paschasius, when they were sent to Ireland as apostolic nuncios, he also ordered to teach Christian doctrine to children and simple folk. And when the same Father Salmeron and Father Master Lainez attended, for the first time, the Council of Trent, being sent by Pope Paul III as theologians of His Holiness, the instructions that he gave them were, before giving their opinion in the council, to betake themselves to the hospital and serve the poor patients there, and teach the children the elements of our faith; and after having cast these roots, they were then to pass on and speak out their opinion in the council, for so there would be profit and fruit of souls, as we know that by the Lord's goodness there was. And shall we go looking about us, fearing, and measuring the issue by the dictates of human prudence, whether there is a loss of authority by doing these things? Never you fear that the pulpit will lose credit by your going to teach catechism, or giving discourses in public places, hospitals, and prisons. Never you fear losing credit with respectable people because they see you hearing the confessions of the poor, or yourself going about in the garb of a poor religious; rather thereby you gain authority, and reap more credit and reputation, and will do more good to souls, since God raises up the humble and is wont to work wonders through them.

But leaving aside this, which is the main reason, and taking the argument by way of human prudence and reason, you cannot find more effectual means to gain authority and good name among your neighbors and do much good to their souls than to employ yourself in those occupations which look lowly and humble, and all the more, the greater are your capacities. The reason thereof is this. So high is the value that the world attaches to honor and reputation and high things, that one of the things that its people

admire most is to see a man regardless of his own standing; to see one who might be engaged in high and honorable occupations, busying himself in lowly and humble ones; hence they conceive a high opinion and esteem of the sanctity of such and receive their teaching as coming from heaven.

We read of Father Francis Xavier in his Life that, on embarking for the Indies, refusing to take any outfit for his voyage, he met with earnest remonstrances from the Count de Castañeda, who was then minister of marine in those parts. The count begged him at least to take with him a servant to wait upon him at sea. He told him that he would lose credit and authority with the people whom he had to teach if they saw him with the rest washing his linen at the gunwale of the ship and cooking his own dinner. The father replied: "My lord count, this is what has reduced the Church of God and her prelates to the condition in which they are at this day, the attempt to gain credit and authority by the means which your lordship suggests. The means whereby credit and authority should be gained is by washing one's rags and cooking the pot without having need of anyone, and all the time employing oneself in the service of one's neighbors' souls." At this answer the count was so struck and edified that he had nothing more to reply. In this way and by this humility and simplicity authority is to be acquired, and in this way fruit of souls. And we see that Father Francis Xavier effected so much in the Indies by teaching catechism to children, and going about ringing the bell at night for the souls in purgatory, and serving and comforting the sick, and other lowly and humble offices. Thus he came to have so much authority and reputation that he stole away and drew to himself the hearts of all, and they called him "the holy Padre." This is the authority that is wanted for gaining fruit of souls—the name and reputation of humble men, the name and reputation of saints and preachers of the Gospel. So this it is that we should endeavor to procure; as for those airs of

authority and points of honor which savor and reek of the world, they rather do harm and give great disedification to our neighbor, as well to those outside the house as to those within.

On those words in St. John: *I do not seek my own glory, my Father takes account of that* (John viii. 50), a certain doctor says very well: "If, then, our heavenly Father seeks and safeguards our glory and our honor, there is no need for us to take care of it." Make it your policy to humble yourself and to be what you ought to be, and leave to God your credit and authority as a means to gather more fruit of souls; for where you humble and abase yourself, there you will the more raise yourself up, and gain a reputation very different from that which you might have gained by those human means and devices.

Neither, again, must you set before yourself the honor and authority of your order, which is another pretense that sometimes offers itself in this and in other matters, to cloak our own imperfection and want of mortification. "Oh, I do not this for myself, but for the credit of the order, which it is right should be respected and regarded." Leave alone these respects and regards. Your order will gain more by their seeing you humble, silent, and suffering; for in this consists the credit and reputation of a religious order, in its members' being humble and mortified and far removed from all savor and odor of the world.

Father Maffei in his "History of the Indies" relates that, while one of our fathers in Japan was preaching the faith of Christ our Redeemer in a public street of Firando, one of those heathens who happened to be passing that way made mockery of the preacher and, hawking up a great mass of phlegm, spat it in his face. The preacher drew out his handkerchief and wiped it off, without showing any concern and without uttering a word, and went on with his sermon in the same tenor and outward appearance as if nothing had happened. One of the hearers took great

notice of this and, seeing the great patience and humility of the preacher, began to think within himself: "It cannot be that a doctrine which teaches so much patience, so much humility and constancy of soul, should not come from heaven; this must be a thing of God," which made such an impression on him that he was moved to be converted. So he went up to the preacher at the end of the sermon, and begged him to instruct him in the faith and baptize him.

CHAPTER XXX

Of the Third Degree of Humility

THE third degree of humility is when one endowed with great virtues and gifts of God and standing high in the honor and esteem of men, is not proud of anything, nor attributes anything to himself, but refers and attributes everything to the same source, which is God, of Whom comes *every good and perfect gift* (James i. 14). This third degree of humility, says St. Bonaventure, is proper to good and perfect men, who, the greater they are, humble themselves the more in everything. That one who is evil and imperfect should know and rate himself for such, is no great matter; it is a good thing and praiseworthy, but no marvel, any more than it would be for the son of a peasant to have no mind to be taken for the son of a king, or for the poor to hold himself poor, and the invalid for invalid, and for such like persons to be willing to be taken for what they are. But for the rich to hold himself poor, and for the great to diminish himself and put himself on a level with the lowly, making himself small, that is a thing to wonder at. So, as the saint says, it is no marvel for one who is evil and imperfect to hold himself for evil and imperfect; rather it would be a strange thing if, being what he is, he took himself for a good and perfect person, as though a man full of leprosy took himself for a sound man. But for one who is far advanced in virtues and enjoys many gifts of

God and is truly great before His Divine Majesty to hold himself for a small and insignificant creature—that is great humility and a thing to marvel at.

St. Bernard says: "A great and rare virtue it is to do great deeds and not take oneself for great, but for slight and small—to have all the world holding you for a saint and an admirable man, while you yourself make little account of yourself. I take that to be more than all the rest of your virtues"—*Magna et rara virtus profecto est, cum magna opereris, magnum te nescire; cum omnibus nota sit sanctitas tua, te solum lateat; cum omnibus magnus appareas, tibi soli vilescas. Hoc ego ipsis virtutibus mirabilius iudico.* This humility was found most perfectly in the holy Queen of Angels, who, knowing herself to be chosen for Mother of God, with the deepest humility recognized herself for His servant and handmaid. St. Bernard says: "Being chosen for such a high dignity and great honor as to be Mother of God, she calls herself His handmaid; and being pronounced by the mouth of St. Elizabeth blessed amongst all women, she takes to herself no glory for those great endowments she has, but attributes them all to God, thanking Him and magnifying Him for them, while herself she remains entire and firm in the deepest humility." *My soul doth magnify*, and so forth (Luke i. 46). This the humility of heaven. There the blessed keep themselves in this humility. This, says St. Gregory, is what St. John saw in the Apocalypse of those four-and-twenty elders who, prostrate before the throne of God, adored Him, taking their crowns off their heads and casting them at the foot of the throne (Apoc. iv. 4, 10). He says that casting their crowns at the foot of the throne of God means attributing their victories, not to themselves, but all to God, Who gave them strength and virtue to overcome, thus giving Him the honor and glory of it all. *Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power and might, for thou hast created all things, and by*

thy will they are and continue to be, as by that will they were created (Apoc. iv. 11). It is right, O Lord, that we should give Thee the honor and glory of all, and take the crowns off our heads and cast them at Thy feet, for all is Thine, by Thy will it has been made, and if we have any good, it is because Thou hast willed it. This, then, is the third degree of humility, not to be elated at the gifts and graces that we have received from God, but to attribute and refer all to God, as author and giver of all good.

But someone may say: If humility consists in that, we are all humble; for who does not know that all good comes to us from God and that of ourselves we have nothing but sins and miseries? Which of us is there that does not say: If God were to withdraw His hand, I should be the worst man in the world? *Perdition is thine, O Israel: of me only cometh thy aid* (Osee xiii. 9). All blessings and all good things must come to us by conveyance of the liberality of God. This is the Catholic faith, and so it seems that we have all got this humility, since we all thoroughly believe this truth, of which Holy Writ is full. *Every good and perfect gift must come to us from above from the Father of lights* (James i. 17). And the Apostle St. Paul: *What hast thou that thou hast not received? For of ourselves we are not sufficient to have any good thought as coming from ourselves, but all our sufficiency is of God: it is God that worketh in us as well to will good as to put it in act according to his good will* (II Cor. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13). He means that we cannot do anything, nor speak anything, nor desire anything, nor think anything, nor start anything helpful towards our salvation, without God, from Whom all our sufficiency proceeds.

And what clearer comparison could be given us to make us understand this than that which Christ Himself declares in His holy Gospel? *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it remain in the vine, so neither can ye unless ye remain in me* (John xv. 4). Would you see the little or

nothing that you can do without Me? As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it be united with the vine, so none can do any meritorious work by himself, if he is not united with Me. *I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same shall bear much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John xv. 5). What thing more fruitful than the branch united with the vine? And what thing more useless and good for nothing than the branch separated from the vine? What is it good for? God asks the Prophet Ezechiel: *What shall be done with the branch? It is of no use as timber to do any work of carpentry, nor to make a peg to put in a wall to hang anything on: the branch separated from the vine is no good but for the fire* (Ezech. xv. 2-4). Such are we if we are not united with the true life, which is Christ. *If anyone abideth not united with me, he shall be cast out and wither away, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth* (John xv. 6). We are worthless except for the fire; if we are worth anything, it is by the grace of God, as St. Paul says: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (I Cor. xv. 10). It seems that we are all well grounded in this truth, that all the good that we have is of God, and that of ourselves we are nothing but sins, and that we have no good to attribute to ourselves, but all must go to God. This does not seem very difficult for one who believes, that we should assign it for the highest and most perfect degree of humility, since it is so plain a truth of faith. So it appears at first sight. Looking at it superficially and on the face of things, it seems easy; but it is not so, but difficult.

Cassian says that to beginners it seems an easy thing to attribute nothing to themselves, not to rest or confide in their own industry and diligence, but to refer and attribute all to God; but it is not so—it is very difficult. For as we ourselves also have some share in our good works, as we too *work and concur with God—Dei enim sumus adiutores* (I Cor. iii. 9), forthwith and almost imperceptibly we come

to rest and rely on ourselves, and there comes over our mind a secret presumption and pride, thinking that it was by our industry and diligence this was done and that; and so we proceed to pride and vanity and elation over the actions that we do, as though it were by our own strength that we did them, and as though they were wholly ours. This is not such an easy business as it appears. Enough for us to know that the saints assign this for the most perfect degree of humility, and say that it is the humility of great souls, so that we may understand that there is in it more difficulty and perfection than appears. For a man to receive great gifts of God and do great works, and be able to give to God the glory of it as he ought, without attributing to himself anything or taking in it any vain complacency, is a thing of high perfection. To be honored and praised as a saint, and not to have one's heart tainted by such honor and high appreciation any more than as though there were no such thing on the horizon, is a difficult thing, and few attain to it; much virtue is required for that.

St. Chrysostom says that to walk in the midst of honors without the heart's being tainted of him who is so honored, is like walking among beautiful women without ever looking upon them with other than chaste eyes. A difficult and dangerous thing that, and much virtue is required for it. A good head is needful to walk high up and not get giddy; not everyone has the head to walk on a height. The angels had it not in heaven, Lucifer and his companions, and so they got their heads turned and fell into the abyss of hell. They say that this was the sin of the angels, that God having created them so beautiful and so fair, with so many gifts natural and supernatural, they did not *stand in God* (*in veritate non stetit*, John viii. 44), nor attribute to Him the glory of it all, but they stood in themselves—not that they thought that they had these things of themselves, for they well knew that they were creatures, but because, as the Prophet Ezekiel says: *Thy heart is lifted up in thy*

beauty, and thou hast lost thy wisdom in thy brilliant splendor (Ezech. xxviii. 17). They became vain of their beauty, proud as peacocks of the gifts they had received from God, and reveled in them as though they had them of their own. They did not refer and attribute them all to God, giving Him the glory and honor thereof, but they grew vain and elated and foolishly self-satisfied, as though they had of themselves the good things that were theirs. Thus, though with their understanding they knew that glory was due to God, with their will they refused to give it and attributed it to themselves. You see that this degree of humility is not such an easy thing as it looks, since to the very angels it was a difficulty, and under it they fell from the height on which God had placed them, because they could not maintain themselves there. Now if the angels had not a head strong enough to walk on high, but grew vain and fell, much more reason have we to fear lest we grow vain if set and raised up on high, for we men are such poor creatures that we vanish into thin air like smoke (*honorificati et exaltati quemadmodum fumus deficient*, Psalm xxxvi. 20). As smoke, the higher it goes up, is the more undone and disappears, so miserable and proud man falls away into vanity, the more they honor him and raise him to high estate.

Oh, how well and how much to the point did Christ our Redeemer advise us of this! The holy Gospel relates that, after He had sent the seventy-two disciples to preach, they returned very well satisfied and in high glee from their mission, saying: "O Lord, we have done wonders; even the devils submitted and obeyed us in Thy name." The Redeemer answered very seriously: *I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven* (Luke x. 18). Beware of vain satisfaction; see how on that account Lucifer fell from heaven, because in that high estate in which he was created he grew full of vain self-complacency over the gifts that he had received, and did not attribute to God the glory and honor thereof as he should have done, but sought to exalt

himself therewith. Let not the same thing happen to you; do not you grow vain of the wonders and great things that you do in My name, nor take any vain complacency therein. These words are spoken to us. See that you do not grow proud of the fact that by your instrumentality much fruit is produced among your neighbors and many souls gained. Beware of taking any vain satisfaction in the applause and good opinion of men and the high regard they show you. See that you are not at all elated; see that honor and reputation do not taint your heart, for that is what made Lucifer fall, and of an angel turned him into a devil. Wherein you see, says St. Augustine, what an evil thing pride is, since of angels it makes devils; and, conversely, what a good thing is humility, which likens men to the holy angels.

CHAPTER XXXI

Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility

WE have not done with giving a good account of what the third degree of humility consists in; and so it will be necessary to explain it a little further, that we may better put it into execution, which is our object. This third degree of humility, say the saints, consists in knowing how to distinguish between the gold that comes to us of God, the gold of His gifts and benefits, and the clay and misery that we are ourselves, and giving to each what belongs to him; attributing to God what is of God, and to ourselves what is ours; and all this must be done in practice, which is the point of this business. Thus humility does not consist in the speculative knowledge that of ourselves we can do nothing and are worth nothing, and that all good must come to us of God, and that He it is that works in us both to will and to begin and finish according to His free will and good pleasure, as St. Paul says (Phil. ii. 13)—for this speculative knowledge is easy, since faith tells

us so, and we Christians all know and believe accordingly—but in knowing and acting on this knowledge in practice, and in being as clear and firm-seated in this truth as though we saw it with our eyes and touched it with our hands. This is what St. Ambrose says is a most particular gift and great grace of God, quoting to this effect that saying of St. Paul: *We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit of God, that we may know and appreciate the gifts that we have received of him* (I Cor. ii. 12). For a man to know and recognize the gifts that he has received from God as being another's, and as received and given out of the liberality and mercy of God, is a special gift and favor of the Most High. The wise Solomon says that this is the height of wisdom. *I knew that I could not be continent unless God gave it me: and this was itself wisdom, to know whose gift it was.* Or, according to another reading, *this was the height of wisdom* (Wisdom viii. 21). Practically to understand and know that to be continent is not a thing that we can secure by our own strength, and that no labor or industry of ours is enough for this, but that it is a gift of God and must come to us from His hand, is the height of wisdom. Now in this which St. Paul says is a special gift and favor of God, and Solomon calls the height of wisdom, this degree of humility consists. *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* says the Apostle St. Paul. All that we have is received, coming from another; of ourselves we have just nothing. *If then thou hast received it, coming from another, why dost thou glory as is thou hadst not received it, and as though it were thine own?* (I Cor. iv. 7).

This is the humility of the saints, that, while they are enriched with gifts and graces of God, and He has raised them to the height of perfection, and thereby to great honor and high estimation in the world, nevertheless they hold themselves so cheap in their own eyes, and their soul remains so wholly taken up with its own lowliness and humility, that it is as though it had none of these gifts.

There was no taint of vanity in their heart, nor did any of that honor and esteem in which the world held them affect them, because they knew well how to distinguish between what was another's and what was their own. Thus they regarded all gifts, honors, and reputation as belonging to another and received from God, and to Him they gave and attributed all the glory and praise thereof, themselves remaining plunged in their own lowliness, considering that of themselves they had nothing and were incapable of any good. Hence it came about that, though all the world exalted them, they were not elated, nor thought any more of themselves on that account, nor was their heart tainted by anything of all this, but they thought that those praises were not uttered or spoken of them, but of another, that is, God; and in Him and in His glory they placed all their joy and satisfaction.

Thus there is good reason for saying that this humility belongs to great and perfect men. First, because it supposes great virtues and gifts of God, which is that which makes a man great before Him. Secondly, because for a man to be truly great in the eyes of God and far advanced in virtue and perfection, and on that account highly regarded and appreciated by God and men, and still to hold himself cheap in his own eyes, is great and marvelous perfection. And this it is that St. Chrysostom and St. Bernard admire in the apostles and others, that, being such great saints, so laden with God's gifts, and His Majesty working through them such marvels and miracles as raising the dead, and they being on that account in such high repute with all the world, they remained as wholly lost in their humility and lowliness as though they had nothing of this, as though another did these things and not themselves, as though all that honor, credit, and praise were another's, and were paid to another and not to them.

St. Bernard says: "It is no great thing to humble yourself in poverty and low condition, because such a condition

of itself helps you to know yourself and keep within your own bounds; but for a man to be honored and thought much of by all and taken for a holy and admirable man, and still to remain as thoroughly convinced of the truth of his own lowliness and nothingness as if he had nothing of all that about him—that is a rare and excellent virtue and a thing of great perfection.” In such men, says St. Bernard, according to the Lord’s precept (Matt. v. 16) their light shines out brilliantly before men to glorify not themselves but their heavenly Father Who is in heaven. These are the true imitators of the Apostle St. Paul and of the Gospel preachers who preach not themselves but Jesus Christ (I Cor. iv. 15; II Cor. xii. 14). These are the good and faithful servants, who seek not their own interests, nor exalt themselves in any way, nor attribute anything to themselves, but attribute all faithfully to God and give Him the glory of all, and so shall hear from the mouth of the Lord those words: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things* (Matt. xxv. 21).

CHAPTER XXXII

Further Elucidation of the Same

WE have said that the third degree of humility is when a man, possessed of great virtues and gifts of God and held in high honor and esteem, takes no pride in anything, nor attributes anything to himself, but refers and attributes all to the same source, which is God, giving Him the glory of all, and remains all swallowed up in his lowliness and humility as though he had nothing and did nothing. We do not mean hereby to say that we do not also work and have our share in the good works that we do—for that would be a piece of ignorance and an error. It is clear that we and our free will concur and work jointly

with God in our good works; for man freely gives his consent to them, and on that account it is true to say that "man works," because of his own proper and free will he wills what he wills, and works what he works, and it is in his power not to do the work. Nay, this it is that makes this degree of humility so difficult; because on the one hand we ourselves have to put in act all our diligence, and use all the means we can, to gain virtue and resist temptation and bring our business to a successful issue, as if our efforts alone were sufficient for that purpose; and on the other hand, after having done that, we must distrust altogether what we have done as if we had done nothing, and hold ourselves for useless and unprofitable servants, and put our whole confidence in God. So He teaches us in the Gospel: *After ye have done all the things that are commanded you*—He does not say "some," but "all"—say: *We are unprofitable servants, we have done what we were bound to do* (Luke xvii. 10). But to do this, no little virtue is necessary. Cassian says: "Whoever shall come to know well that he is a useless servant, and that all the means and contrivances that he applies are not sufficient to do any good, but it must be the gracious gift of the Lord that does it, such a man will not grow proud over any success, because he will understand that he did not gain it by his own industry, but by the grace and mercy of God, as St. Paul says: *What hast thou that thou hast not received?* (I Cor. iv. 7)."

St. Augustine brings a good comparison to elucidate this. He says that without the grace of God we are no more than what a body is without a soul. As a dead body cannot move or handle anything, so we without the grace of God cannot do works of life or value before God. Now as it would be foolish for a body to attribute life and movement to itself, and not to the soul that is in it and gives it life, so that soul would be very blind who should attribute to herself the good work that she does, and not to God, Who has poured upon her the spirit of life, which is the grace

whereby she is enabled to do them. And elsewhere he says that, as the bodily eyes can see nothing, even though they are quite healthy, without the aid of light, so man, however justified he be, cannot lead a good life without the aid of the light and grace of God. *Unless the Lord keepeth the city, the watchman watcheth in vain* (Psalm cxxvi. 1). "Oh, that men knew themselves," says St. Augustine, "and would once for all understand that they have nothing in themselves to glory in, but only in God." Oh, that God would send us a ray of light from heaven to scatter our darkness and make us know and feel that there is no good, nor being, nor strength anywhere in the whole of creation but what the Lord of His gracious mercy has been pleased to give and is pleased to preserve! In this, then, consists the third degree of humility; only our brief words cannot reach so far as to declare the great and profound perfection there is in it. However much we say of it, now in one way, now in another, not only the practice but the theory of it too remains difficult.

This is that annihilation of self, so repeatedly recommended by the masters of spiritual life; this is that holding and confessing of oneself unworthy and useless for all things, *ad omnia indignum et inutilem se confiteri et credere*, which St. Benedict and other saints assign for the highest degree of humility; this is that distrust of self, and that fastening of oneself and hanging upon God, so commended in Holy Writ; this is that genuine taking of oneself for nothing, which at every step we hear and say, and never quite succeed in feeling in our hearts. Oh, that we understood and felt sincerely and practically—as a thing that we saw with our eyes and touched and felt with our hands—that of ourselves we have not, and cannot have, anything but perdition and sins, and that all the good that we have and do, we have it not and do it not of ourselves, and that His is the honor and glory of it all.

And if after all said and done you still fail to understand the perfection of this degree of humility, be not astonished, for it is very high theology, and it is no matter of surprise that you do not understand it so easily. A doctor says that this happens in all arts and sciences, that everyone knows and understands the common and evident things, but not all attain to subtle and delicate points, but only those who are eminent in that art or science. So here the common and ordinary things of virtue anyone can understand; but special and subtle things, things lofty and delicate, are understood by those only who are eminent and advanced in that virtue. And this is what St. Lawrence Justinian says, that no one quite knows what sort of a thing humility is but he who has received of God grace to be humble. And this is how the saints, being men of most profound humility, feel and say of themselves things that we, who have not got so far, fail to understand and hold for exaggerations and pious fictions, as that they are the greatest sinners of all people in the world, and the like, as we shall say presently. And if we are unable to say or feel these things and cannot even quite understand them, it is because we have not attained to such humility as they, and so we do not understand the subtle and delicate points of this faculty. Do you contrive to be humble, and grow continually in this science, and progress further and further in it, and then you will understand how they can say such things with truth.

CHAPTER XXXIII

*Further Elucidation of the Third Degree of Humility, and
How It Comes Thereof that the Truly Humble
Takes Himself for the Least of All*

THAT we may better understand this third degree of humility and be able to establish ourselves well in it, it is necessary to take the water further upstream. As we

said above, all our natural being and all our natural activities we hold of God; of ourselves we are nothing, and therefore we have no power to move, nor to see, nor to hear, nor to taste, nor to understand, nor to will; but God gives us our natural being, and therewith He gives us all its powers and capabilities, and so to Him we have to attribute at once its being and its natural activities. In like manner and with much more reason must we speak of our supernatural being and works of grace, and that all the more as they are greater and more excellent. The supernatural being that we have we have not of ourselves, but of God; in short, it is a being of grace (*gratia*), which is so called because it is added unto our natural being gratuitously. We are born in sin, *children of wrath* (Eph. ii. 3), enemies of God, Who hath *drawn us out of this darkness into his admirable light* (I Pet. ii. 9). God has made us of enemies, friends; of slaves, sons; of good-for-nothingness, beings agreeable in His eyes. And the reason why He has done this has been no merits of ours, nor any regard for services that we have rendered Him, but purely His goodness and mercy, as St. Paul says, *being justified gratuitously by the grace of God, by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus* (Rom. iii. 24), and by the merits of Christ our only Redeemer.

Now as we could not of ourselves emerge from the nothingness in which we were to the natural being that we enjoy, nor could we do any vital actions, such as seeing, hearing, or feeling, but all that came by the gracious gift of God, and to Him we have to ascribe it all without being able to put down to our glory any part of it; so neither could we emerge from the darkness of sin, in which we were conceived and born, if God by His infinite goodness and mercy did not draw us out of it; nor could we do works of life if He did not give us His grace thereto. For the value and merit of our works arises not from anything that we held of ourselves, but from what we hold by the

grace of the Lord, as the value of coin is not of itself, but of the stamp impressed upon it. Thus we must not attribute to ourselves any glory, but all to God, to Whom natural and supernatural alike belong, having ever in our mouth and in our heart that saying of St. Paul: *By the grace of God I am what I am* (I Cor. xv. 10).

But as we were saying that not only has God drawn us out of nothingness and given us the being that we have, but also, since we were created and received being, we do not hold it of ourselves, but of God sustaining us, holding us up, and supporting us by His almighty hand that we fall not into the deep well of nothingness out of which He originally drew us; in like manner in the supernatural order not only has God done us the favor of drawing us out of the darkness of sins, in which we were, to the admirable light of His grace, but He is ever preserving us and holding us by His hand, that we fall not back again. Thus if for one moment God retired, and withdrew His hand and guard over us, and allowed the devil to tempt us as he would like, we should fall back into our past sins and others worse. *God is ever at my right hand lest I be upset*, says the Prophet David (Psalm xv. 8). Thou art always at my right hand, holding me that I be not overthrown. It is Thy work, O Lord, to raise us up from our faults, and Thine again our not having fallen back again into them; if I rise, it is because Thou lendest me a hand; and if at this hour I am on my feet, it is because Thou holdest me to keep me from falling. Now as we were saying that this is enough to keep us in our nothingness, that on our part nothingness we are, nothingness we were, and nothingness we should be if God were not ever conserving us, so it is also enough to make us hold ourselves for sinners and wicked creatures that on our part such we are, and such we were, and such we should be, if God's hand were not ever supporting us.

So says Albertus Magnus that whoever wishes to gain humility must plant in his heart the root of humility, which

is the knowledge of his own weakness and misery, and right well understand and ponder, not only how vile and miserable he is now, but how vile and miserable he might be and would be at this day if God by His mighty hand did not remove him from sins, and keep him out of occasions thereof, and help him under temptation. Into how many sins should I have fallen, if Thou, O Lord, hadst not in Thy infinite mercy delivered me! How many occasions of sin hast Thou saved me from, that would have been enough to overthrow me, since they overthrew David, if Thou hadst not put a check upon them, knowing my weakness! How many times hast Thou tied the hands of the devil, that he might not tempt me as much as he could; and if he did tempt, that he might not overcome me! How many times might I have said with truth those words of the prophet: *Lord, if Thou hadst not helped me, by this time my soul would have been in hell* (Psalm xciii. 17)! How many times have I been assailed and turned upside down to the very brink of falling, and Thou, O Lord, hast held me, and laid Thy loving and mighty hand upon me, that it might not hurt me! *If I said to thee, my feet have slipped; at once thy mercy came to my aid* (Psalm xciii. 18). Oh, how many times should we have been lost ere now if God in His infinite goodness and mercy had not kept us safe! This, then, is the attitude which we ought to take up, because this is what we are, and this is what we have on our part; this is what we have been, and what we should be now if God were to withdraw and take away His hand from keeping us.

From this the saints came to such sentiments of shame and confusion, self-contempt and self-humiliation, that, not content with thinking little of themselves and taking themselves for wicked men and sinners, they made themselves out to be the least and last of all, the vilest and most sinful of all men in the world. Such a man as St. Francis—of whom we read that God had raised and exalted him so high

that his companion, being in prayer, saw prepared for him among the seraphim a chair richly alight with many-colored enamels and jewels—this St. Francis, when the question was put to him afterwards: “Father, what is your own estimate of yourself?” answered: “I believe that there is not in the world a greater sinner than I am.” And the same thing was said by the glorious Apostle St. Paul: *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the first and chiefest* (I Tim. i. 15). And thus he admonishes us to endeavor to attain such humility as to hold ourselves inferior to all and least of all, and recognize all for our superiors and betters. St. Augustine says: “The Apostle is not leading us astray when he bids us (Phil. ii. 3-4) take ourselves for the least and reckon all for greater than and superior to ourselves, nor is he bidding us speak words of vain compliment and flattery.” The saints practised no lying nor pretended humility in saying that they were the greatest sinners in the world, but spoke the truth as they felt it in their hearts. And so they charge us to have the same sentiment, and speak it out without affectation and not for mere form’s sake.

St. Bernard makes excellent reflection to this purpose on our Savior’s saying: *When thou art invited to a feast, seat thyself in the last place* (Luke xiv. 10). He did not say, “Choose a middle place,” or “Seat thyself among the last or in the last place but one,” but He absolutely wishes you to take the last place. Not only must you not prefer yourself to any, but you must not presume to compare or equalize yourself with anyone; you must absolutely stay in the last place, without companion in your abasement, holding yourself for the most miserable and sinful of all. There is no danger, he says, in humbling yourself much and setting yourself below the feet of all; but to prefer yourself to a single one is a thing you cannot do without much harm’s coming of it. And he applies this common comparison. When you pass under a low doorway, you cannot

hurt yourself by lowering your head too much, but in lowering it ever so little less than the doorway requires you, the doorway will do you much hurt and break your head. So the soul that abases and humbles herself cannot suffer any harm; but to humble onself a little, and claim to excel or equal even only one person, is a dangerous thing. How do you know but that the man, though there is but one, who you think is not only a worse man than you, but is the wickedest of the wicked and perhaps the greatest sinner of sinners, you taking it for granted perhaps that you are now leading a good life, may be better than they and better than you, and whether he is not so already in the eyes of God? Who knows but that God will cross His hands, as Jacob did (Gen. xlviii. 14), and change men's destinies, and that you will be the disinherited and the other the elect? How do you know what God has worked in his heart from yesterday till this moment, and that in one instant? *It is easy in the eyes of God suddenly to enrich the poor* (Ecclus. xi. 23). In an instant God can make His apostles out of a publican and a persecutor of the Church, as He did with St. Matthew and St. Paul. Of obdurate sinners and hearts harder than adamant He can make sons of God (Matt. iii. 9). How much mistaken was that Pharisee (Luke vii. 39), who judged Magdalen for a wicked woman, and how did Christ our Redeemer rebuke him and give him to understand that she whom he took for a public sinner was a better person than he was! And so St. Benedict, St. Thomas, and other saints assign this for one of the twelve degrees of humility, to say and feel of oneself that one is the worst man of all—*credere et pronuntiare se omnibus viliores*. It is not enough to say this with your lips, but you must think so in your heart. "Think not that you have made any advance, if you do not account yourself the worst of all," says that holy man (Å Kempis).

CHAPTER XXXIV

How Good and Holy Men Can with Truth Hold Themselves to Be the Least of All and Say that They Are the Greatest Sinners in the World

IT will be no curious speculation, but a very profitable instruction, to explain how good and holy men could with truth hold themselves for the least and last of all and say they were the greatest sinners in the world—seeing that we say we ought to make it our endeavor to attain to that point of view. Some saints do not care to give any answer to this question, but are content with thinking so in their hearts. St. Dorotheus tells how the Abbot Zosimus was one day discoursing on humility, and said so of himself. There happened to be there a sophist, or philosopher, who asked him: “How can you say that you are a sinner, since you know that you keep God’s commandments?” The holy abbot answered him: “I know that what I say is true, and so I feel it to be; do not ask me.” But St. Augustine, St. Thomas, and other saints answer this question, and give different answers. That of St. Augustine and of St. Thomas is that, when a man keeps before his eyes the defects that he knows in himself and considers in his neighbor the secret gifts that he has, or may have, of God, anyone may say of himself with truth that he is a viler and greater sinner than all, because I know my defects alone, and I do not know the secret gifts which the other man has of God. “Oh, but I see that he commits so many sins which I do not commit.” “And how do you know what God has worked in his heart just at this last moment?” In a moment, secretly and suddenly, he may have received some gift and favor of God whereby he has made a great start forward, as happened to that Pharisee and that publican of the Gospel, who entered into the Temple to pray. *Verily I say unto you*, says Christ our Redeemer (Luke xviii. 14),

that the publican, who was held to be a bad man, came out from there justified; and the Pharisee, who took himself for a good man, came out condemned. That ought to be enough to make us take warning never to dare to prefer ourselves, or compare ourselves with anybody, but to remain alone in the last place, which is the safe place.

To him who is truly humble at heart it is an easy thing to hold himself the least of all. The truly humble man considers in others the virtue and good that they have, and in himself his own defects, and is so continually taken up with the knowledge and correction of these as never to raise his eyes to look at other people's faults, thinking that he has enough to do with bewailing his own woes; and so he takes his neighbors all for good people, and himself alone for evil. And the holier a man is, the easier is this for him to do, because, as he grows in other virtues, he grows likewise in humility and self-knowledge, for all these things go together. And the more light and knowledge he has of the goodness and majesty of God, the deeper knowledge he has of his own misery and nothingness, since *abyss cries to abyss* (Psalm xli. 8). The abyss of knowledge of the goodness and greatness of God reveals the abyss and depth of our misery, and shows to the eye the endless specks and motes of our imperfections. If we hold ourselves of any account, it is because we have but slight knowledge of God and little light from heaven. The rays of the Sun of Justice have not entered by the gates of our soul; and so not only do we not see the specks, which are our minute faults and imperfections, but we are so shortsighted, or rather we are so blind, that even grave faults escape our eyes.

Add to this that God so loves humility, and is so pleased with a man making little of himself and keeping to that, that in dealing with His great servants, on whom He bestows many favors and benefits, He is wont often so much to disguise His gifts and to impart them so hiddenly

and so secretly that the recipient himself does not understand, and thinks that he is receiving nothing. St. Jerome says: "All the beauty of that tabernacle (Exod. xxxvi. 19) was covered with sackcloth and skins of beasts." So God is wont to cover and hide away the beauty of virtues and of His gifts and benefits; and this He does by divers temptations, and at times by certain faults and imperfections which He permits, that so His gifts may be the better preserved, like live coals covered over with ashes. St. John Climacus says that, as the devil endeavors to put before us our virtues and good works, to make us proud, since he wishes evil to us, so God our Lord, wishing our greater good, is wont to give special light to His servants to know their faults and imperfections, and to throw a veil over and disguise His gifts so that the recipient himself does not recognize them. This is the common doctrine of the saints. St. Bernard says: "To preserve humility in His servants, the Divine Goodness often arranges things in such a way that, the farther a man advances, the less does he think that he is advancing; and when he has reached the highest degree of virtue, God allows to remain in him some imperfection in point of the first degree, so that he thinks that he has not reached even that." St. Gregory observes the same in many places.

On this account some make a very good comparison touching humility, and say that it stands to the other virtues as the sun to the other stars; in this way, that, as when the sun appears, the other stars disappear and cover up, so where there is humility in the soul, the other virtues are occulted, and the humble man fancies that he has no virtue. St. Gregory says: "While their virtues are manifest to all the world, they alone do not see them." Holy Writ relates of Moses that, after having come forth from speaking with God, he carried a great brightness on his face, and the children of Israel saw it, but he did not (Exod. xxxiv. 29); so the humble man does not see in himself any

virtue; all that he sees are his faults and imperfections, and he believes that what he knows is only the lesser part of his shortcomings, and that there are many more that he does not know. Hereby it is easy for him to take himself for the least of all, and for the greatest sinner of all people in the world.

To tell the whole truth, as there are many and diverse ways by which God leads His elect, though He leads many by the way that we have said, throwing a veil over His gifts so that the recipients themselves may not see them, nor think that they have them; yet to others He manifests them, and makes them know them, that they may set store by them and be grateful for them. And so said the Apostle St. Paul: *We have received, not the spirit of this world, but the spirit of God, that we may know the gifts that we have received at his hand* (I Cor. ii. 12). And the most holy Queen of Angels knew very well and recognized the great gifts and favors that she enjoyed and had received of God. *My soul doth magnify the Lord, for he that is almighty hath done great things in me* (Luke i. 49). And this is not only not contrary to humility and perfection, but goes with such a high and exalted humility that on that account the saints call it the humility of great and perfect men.

But there is here a great danger and delusion to which the saints call attention; it is that some people think they have more gifts of God than they have. Under such illusion lay that wretched man to whom God sent a message in the Apocalypse (iii. 17): *Thou sayest, I am rich and want for nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art miserable and poor and blind and naked*. Under the same lay that Pharisee in the Gospel (Luke xviii. 11), who gave thanks to God that he was not as other men, taking himself for a better man than he was and setting himself above others. And sometimes this pride enters into us so stealthily and secretly that almost unconsciously we are full of ourselves and self-esteem. A great remedy for this is to keep our

eyes always open to other people's virtues and closed to our own, and so to live always in a holy fear, whereby the gifts of God are more securely guarded.

But after all, as our Lord is not tied to this, and leads His own by divers ways, He is sometimes pleased to do this favor to His servants, that they do know the gifts which they have received at His hand. And then there seems to be a greater difficulty in the question proposed, how these holy and spiritual men, who know and see in themselves great gifts which they have received from God, can really rate themselves below all and say that they are the greatest sinners in the world. When our Lord conducts a man by that other way of throwing a veil over His gifts, and not letting him see in himself any virtue, but all faults and imperfections, there is no such great difficulty; but how can it be so in others? It may very well be so notwithstanding; be you as humble as St. Francis, and you will understand how. When his companion asked him how he could in truth think and say this of himself, the seraphic father answered: "Truly I understand and believe that, if God had done to a highwayman, or to the greatest of all sinners, the mercies and favors that He has done to me, he would be a much better man than I am, and more grateful than I. And on the other hand I understand and believe that, if God withdrew His hand from me and did not hold me up, I should commit greater sins than all the rest of mankind and be the worst of them all. And therefore," he went on to say, "I am the greatest sinner and the most ungrateful of all men." This is a very good answer, a very profound humility, and a marvelous doctrine. This knowledge and consideration is what made the saints bury themselves beneath the earth, and prostrate themselves at the feet of all, and take themselves sincerely for the greatest sinners in the world; because they had well planted and rooted in their hearts the root of humility, which is the knowledge of one's own weakness and misery and the

knowing how to penetrate and ponder well what they were and had of themselves. This made them believe that, if God withdrew His hand and did not continually hold them up, they would be the greatest sinners in the world, and so they held themselves to be such. And the gifts and benefits that they had received from God they regarded, not as a thing of their own, but as another's property lent to them. So this consciousness of what God had done for them was no obstacle to throw them off the line, because they remained whole and entire in their humility and self-abasement, holding themselves for the least of all; rather it aided them thereto, since they thought that they had not profited of God's gifts as they should have done. Thus whichever way we turn our eyes, now fixing them on what we have of our own, now raising them to what we have received from God, we shall find abundant occasion to humble ourselves and hold ourselves for the least of all.

St. Gregory ponders to this purpose those words that David said to Saul when he might have murdered him in the cave that he had gone into, but spared him and let him go: *Whom dost thou pursue, O King of Israel? Whom dost thou pursue? Thou pursuest a dead dog, and one poor flea* (I Kings xxiv. 15). Yet David was already anointed king, and knew from the Prophet Samuel, who anointed him, that God purposed to take away the kingdom from Saul and give it to him; nevertheless he humbled himself, and disparaged himself before Saul, knowing well that God had preferred him to him, and that he was the better man of the two; that hence we may learn to hold ourselves inferior to others, about whom we do not know in what rank they stand before God.

CHAPTER XXXV

*That This Third Degree of Humility Is the Means to
Overcome All Temptations and Obtain the
Perfection of All Virtues*

CASSIAN says that it was the tradition of those ancient Fathers, and a sort of first principle among them, that one cannot obtain purity of heart, nor the perfection of virtues, unless one first knows and understands that all one's industry, diligence, and labor is not sufficient thereunto without the special aid and favor of God, Who is the author and giver of all good. And this knowledge he says must not be speculative, because so we have heard and read, and faith tells us so, but we must know it practically and by experience, and be as settled and resolved upon this truth as though we saw it with our eyes and touched it with our hands; which description answers word for word to that third degree of humility of which we have been treating. And of this humility are to be understood those innumerable texts of Holy Writ which promise good things to the humble. And therefore with much reason do the saints assign this for the highest and most perfect degree of humility, and say that it is the foundation of all virtues and the preparation and disposition to receive all the gifts of God.

Cassian follows this matter up more particularly, treating of chastity. He says that no labor avails to gain it until we understand by experience that we cannot gain it of our own strength, but it must come to us from the bounty and mercy of God. St. Augustine quite agrees with this, since the first and principal means that he assigns for gaining and preserving the gift of chastity is this humility, not allowing you to think that your own power and efforts are sufficient—you deserve to lose it if you take your stand upon that; but you must understand it to be a gift of God

that must come to you from on high, and therein you must place all your confidence. And so said an old man of those ancient Fathers, that a certain person would go on being tempted in the flesh until he well made up his mind that chastity is the Lord's gift, and not the fruit of our own strength.

Palladius confirms this by the example of Abbot Moses, a man of wonderful strength of body, united to a most vicious soul, who at last was converted with all his heart to God. He was at the outset of his conversion very severely tempted, to impurity especially, and by advice of the holy Fathers took the usual means to meet these attacks. He prayed so much that for six years he spent the greater part of the night in prayer, standing up, without sleeping. He worked hard with his hands; he ate nothing but a little bread; he went round the cells of the aged monks, carrying water; and practised other great mortifications and austerities. For all that, he did not succeed in getting the better of his temptations; he was on fire with them and in great danger of falling and abandoning his profession as a monk. While he was in this distress, there came to him the holy Abbot Isidore, and said to him on the part of God: "From this moment in the name of Jesus Christ all your temptations shall cease." And so it was; they never came again. And the saint went on to declare to him the reason why hitherto God had not given him a complete victory over them. "Moses, it was that you might not glory, thinking that your own practices had given you the victory, and therefore God allowed this long struggle for your benefit." This Moses had not gained the gift of distrust of himself, and God left him so long that he might gain it and not fall into pride. For all his heroic and holy practices he did not gain that victory over this passion which others have gained with less labor.

The same Palladius relates of Abbot Pacon that, though he was an old man of seventy years, he was much molested

with impure temptations. He said and affirmed on oath that after he was fifty years of age, so severe was the struggle and so habitual the combat, that he never passed a day or night all that time without being assailed by this vice. He did many extraordinary things to rid himself of these temptations, and they did him no good. One day while he was lamenting, thinking that the Lord had abandoned him, he heard a voice that said to him interiorly: "Understand that the reason why God has permitted in you this severe conflict has been to teach you your weakness and poverty, and the little or nothing that you have of your own, that so you may humble yourself henceforth, not trusting in anything of your own, but recurring in all cases to Me and asking My aid." And he added that that teaching so consoled and comforted him that he never felt the temptation any more. God wishes that we place all our confidence in Him, and distrust ourselves and our own methods and contrivances.

This doctrine is taught us not only by Augustine, Cassian, and those ancient Fathers, but by the Holy Ghost Himself in set terms. The Wise Man in the Book of Wisdom joins theory and practice together thus: *As I knew that I could not be continent otherwise than by the gift of God—and that itself was a point of wisdom, to know whose gift it was—I approached the Lord, and besought him, and spoke from the depths of my heart* (Wisdom viii. 21). *Continent* (ἐγκρατής) here is a general name, embracing not only the restraint of the passion that is contrary to chastity, but of all the other passions and appetites that militate against reason; so that text of Ecclesiasticus (xxvi. 12): *No weight of silver is worthy to be put in the scales against a continent soul*. A *continent soul* means one who in all directions keeps in and restrains his affections and appetites, that they stray not beyond the bounds of virtue and reason. Solomon then (Wisdom viii. 21) means to say: "Knowing what I knew, that without a special gift of God

I could not always contain those powers and passions of my soul and body within that golden mean of truth and virtue, but that they must sometimes overleap it—and to know this was great wisdom—I had recourse to the Lord and entreated Him with all my heart.” Thus this is the only way to be continent, and to be able to restrain and govern our passions, and keep them within bounds, and gain victory over all temptations and the perfection of all virtues. This the prophet quite recognized when he said: *Unless the Lord build the house, in vain have they labored who build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain who keepeth it* (Psalm cxxvi. 1).

CHAPTER XXXVI

That Humility Is Not Contrary to Magnanimity, but Is the Foundation and Cause Thereof

ST. THOMAS, treating of the virtue of magnanimity, puts this question: On the one hand the saints say, and the holy Gospel says the same, that humility is very necessary for us; and on the other hand magnanimity also is very necessary, especially for those who hold high offices and ministrations. These two virtues, then, seem contrary to one another; since magnanimity is a greatness of soul, ready to undertake and meet great and excellent calls, and hold offices in themselves worthy of honor, and both the one and the other undertaking seems contrary to humility. As regards the former, which is the undertaking of great things, it seems incompatible with humility, since one of the degrees of humility which the saints assign consists in confessing and holding oneself for unworthy and useless for any and every thing—*ad omnia indignum et inutilem se confiteri et credere*; and for a man to undertake a business to which he is inadequate, seems pride and presumption. As for the second requisite, which is the taking of posts

of honor, it seems likewise contrary to that; since the truly humble man must be very far from desiring honor and distinction.

St. Thomas answers all this very well, and says that though, looking at the outward appearance and sound of things, these two virtues seem contrary to one another, yet in fact no virtue can be contrary to another; and he says of these two in particular, humility and magnanimity, that, if we look attentively to the truth and substance of the thing, we shall find them not only not contrary, but very akin and dependent on one another. And he explains this very well. For as to the first point, which is undertaking great things and meeting great calls as is proper for the magnanimous man to do, not only is this not contrary to the status of the humble man, but is very properly his work, and he is the only man who can do it well. If we were to undertake great things, trusting in our own strength and resources, that would be presumption and pride, since neither great things nor little things can we do of our own strength, since *we are not sufficient of ourselves to have even a good thought*, as the Apostle St. Paul says (II Cor. iii. 5). But the firm foundation of this virtue of magnanimity, for the meeting and undertaking of great things, must be distrust of ourselves and of all human means and putting our trust in God, and this is what humility does. That is why the saints call humility the foundation of all virtues, because it opens the ground, sinks the foundations, casts out the sand and loose earth of our own powers, until it comes to the living rock, which is Christ, and thereon it builds.

The glorious Bernard, on that passage of the Canticles: *Who is she that cometh up from the desert laden with rich spices, resting upon her beloved?* (Cant. viii. 5), explains at length how all our virtue and strength and all our good works must rest upon our Beloved. He brings in the example of St. Paul (I Cor. xv. 10): *By the grace of God, I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been made void.*

I have labored more abundantly than all. The Apostle begins to recount his labors and the great share that he has had in the preaching of the Gospel and the service of the Church, until he comes to say that he has labored more than the rest of the apostles. "Look to what you are saying, holy Apostle!" cries St. Bernard; "that you may be able to say this and not lose it all, rest upon your Beloved." He immediately does rest upon his Beloved: *Not I, but the grace of God in me.* And, writing to the Philippians, he says: *I can do all things*, and forthwith resting upon his Beloved, he adds, *in him that strengtheneth me* (Phil. iv. 13). In God we can do all, with His grace we shall be a match for all, on that we must rest, and that must be the ground of our magnanimity and greatness of soul.

And this is what the Prophet Isaias says: *They who distrust themselves and put all their trust in the Lord, shall change their strength* (Isaias xl. 31), for they shall change the strength of men, which is weakness, into the strength of God, exchanging the weak arm of flesh for the strong arm of God; so they shall be strong and powerful for everything, because in God they can do all. And so St. Leo very well said: The truly humble man is the magnanimous man, courageous and strong to meet and undertake great things; nothing shall be to him arduous or difficult, since he does not trust in himself, but in God, fixing his eyes on God and resting on Him. *With the help of God we will do doughty deeds, and he will bring our enemies to nothing* (Psalm lix. 14). In God all things are possible. This is a thing that we have great need of—great courage and strength and confidence in God, not fits of discouragement, which take away all heart for doing our work. Thus in ourselves we must be humble, knowing that of ourselves we are good for nothing, of no avail or competence for anything; but in God and in His might and grace we must be courageous and vigorous to undertake great things.

St. Basil explains this very well on those words of Isaias: *Here I am, send me* (vi. 8). God wished to send someone to preach to His people; and as He wishes to do things through us with our will and consent, He said where Isaias could hear Him: *Whom shall I send, who will go willingly?* The prophet answered: *Lord, here I am, if thou wilt to send me.* St. Basil makes a good reflection. He did not say: "Lord, I will go and do it right well," because he was humble and knew his weakness, and saw that it would be a piece of presumption to promise of himself to do such a great thing, a thing surpassing all his powers; but he says: "Lord, here I am, quite ready and disposed to receive what Thou shalt wish to give me; do Thou send me, because if Thou sendest me I will go." As though he would say: "I am not sufficient for so high a ministry as this, but Thou canst give me sufficiency. Thou canst put words in my mouth to change hearts; if Thou sendest me, I shall be able to go and be sufficient for the work, going in Thy name." And God says to him, "Go." You see here, says St. Basil, the Prophet Isaias given his degree as preacher and apostle of God because he showed himself competent to respond very well in the matter of humility, since he did not ascribe the going to himself, but recognized his own insufficiency and weakness and put all his confidence in God, believing that in Him he could do all, and if He sent him, he should be able to go. Therefore God gives him his degree, making him His preacher, ambassador, and apostle. This should be our strength and our magnanimity, emboldening us to meet and undertake great things. Therefore do not you be disheartened or discouraged at your weakness and insufficiency. *Say not that thou art an infant and canst not speak*, says God to Jeremy, *for to all that I shall send thee thou shalt go, and shalt do all that I shall command thee. Fear not, for I will be with thee* (Jerem. i. 7-8). Thus on this side humility is not only not contrary to magnanimity, but is the root and foundation of it.

Neither is the second mark of the magnanimous man, which is the desire of doing great things and things in themselves deserving of honor, contrary to humility; because, as St. Thomas well says, though the magnanimous man desires to do this, he does not desire it for the sake of human honor, nor is that his end—to deserve it, yes, but not to go after it or value it. Rather he keeps his heart so regardless of honors and disgraces that he reckons nothing great but virtue, and the love of that animates him to do great things, despising the honor of men. For virtue is a thing so high that it cannot be sufficiently honored or rewarded by men, since it deserves to be honored and rewarded by God. Thus the magnanimous man makes no account of the honor of the world; it is a thing too low and worthless for him; his flight soars higher; it is the sole love of God and virtue that moves him to do great works and deeds, despising all the rest.

But to keep a heart so great, so generous, so regardless of the honors and dishonors of men, as the heart of the magnanimous man must be, requires great humility. To arrive at such perfection that you can say with St. Paul: *I know how to behave alike in humiliation and in abundance and prosperity, alike in satiety and in hunger* (Phil. iv. 12)—that winds so violent and contrary as honor and dishonor, praises and complaints, favors and persecutions (II Cor. vi. 8), should work in us no change, nor make us stumble, but that we should always remain in one and the same frame of mind—a great foundation of humility and heavenly wisdom is necessary. I know not whether you would be able to steer your course in the midst of abundance, as the Apostle St. Paul did. To suffer poverty, to beg, to be a sojourner walking humbly in the midst of insults and affronts—perhaps you would be able to do that; but to be humble in the midst of honors, promotion to professors' chairs, pulpits, and high ministries, I am not sure of your competence there. Alas, even the angels were not

competent for that, but lost their heads in vanity and fell. Even the philosopher Boethius said: "Although every change of fortune is to be feared, yet prosperity is more to be feared than adversity." *Cum omnis fortuna timenda sit, magis tamen timenda est prospera quam adversa.* It is more difficult to keep oneself in humility in the midst of honors and worldly reputation and high offices than in slights and incivilities and in lowly and humble duties, because the latter carry humility with them, and the former pride and vanity. *Knowledge puffeth up* (I Cor. viii. 1). Knowledge and other high things of their own nature puff men up and fill them with vanity. Therefore the saints say that it is the humility of great and perfect men to be able to keep humble in the midst of great gifts and favors received from God and the honors and esteem of the world.

There is related of the blessed St. Francis a thing that seems very different from the occasion when he set to kneading the mud with his feet to escape the honorable reception which the townspeople were prepared to give him. He came once into a town, and they showed him great honor for the opinion and esteem they had of his sanctity; they crowded to kiss his habit, his hands and his feet, and he offered no resistance. His companion judged that he took pleasure in this honor, and the temptation so far overcame him that in the end he spoke to him to that effect. The saint replied: "These people, brother, are doing nothing in comparison with the honor which they ought to pay." His companion was more scandalized than ever at this reply, for he did not understand it. Then the saint said to him: "Brother, this honor which you see them do me I do not attribute to myself, but refer it all to God, to Whom it belongs, keeping myself in the depths of my unworthiness, while they gain thereby, since they recognize and honor God in His creature." His companion was satisfied, and marveled at the perfection of the saint, and with good reason, since to be regarded and honored as a

saint, which is the highest honor and esteem in which one can be held, and to know how to give to God the glory of it, as one ought, without attributing anything to oneself and without the honey's sticking to one's hands, or taking any vain satisfaction therein, but remaining as deep plunged in one's humility and lowliness as though one had no part therein, and as though the honor were being paid not to oneself, but to another—this is very high perfection and a most profound humility.

Now this is the humility to which we ought to aspire, especially those of us who are called, not to be put into a corner and hidden beneath the dustbin, but to be set on high like a city seated on a mountain, and like a cresset on a stand to enlighten and give light to the world. For such a position it is necessary to have laid one's foundations deep, and to have a great desire, so far as it rests with us, to be despised and disregarded, a desire springing from a deep sense of our own misery and vileness and nothingness, such a desire as St. Francis had when he fell to kneading the clay with his feet in order to be taken for a fool. From this deep self-knowledge which he had, and from which came his desire to be despised and disregarded, it also came about that, when they honored him and kissed his habit and feet, he felt no vanity and thought no more of himself on that account, but remained plunged in his lowliness and humility as if they were paying him no honor, attributing and referring it all to God. Thus, though these two actions of St. Francis seem so contrary to one another, they sprang from the same root and spirit of humility.

CHAPTER XXXVII

Of Other Good Things and Great Advantages There Are in This Third Degree of Humility

THINE are all things, and what we have received at thy hand we have given thee (I Chron. xxix. 14). After King David had made ready much store of gold and silver and building materials for the edifice and fabric of the Temple, he spoke the above words. That is what we ought to do and say in all our good works: "Lord, all our good works are Thine, and so we give back that which Thou hast given us." St. Augustine says very well: "Whoever sets himself to reckoning up to Thee his merits and the services he has rendered Thee, what else does he recount, O Lord, but the gifts and benefits which he has received at Thy hand?"—*Quisquis tibi enumerat merita sua, quid tibi enumerat nisi munera tua?* This is Thy bounty and liberality, that Thou wishest that Thy gifts and benefits should be new merits of ours; and thus when Thou payest our services, Thou rewardest Thine own benefits, and for one favor Thou grantest us another. Like another Joseph, the Lord is not content with giving us the wheat, but he gives us also the money and the price along with the article (Gen. xlv. 23). *The Lord will give grace and glory* (Psalm lxxxiii. 12). Everything is the gift of God, and everything we ought to attribute and return to Him.

One of the good things and great advantages that there are in the third degree of humility is this, that it is a form of good and true gratitude and thanksgiving for benefits received from God. It is a well-known thing how much this returning of thanks is commended and prized in Holy Writ. Thus we see that, when the Lord did any signal benefit to His people, He at once ordered some memorial and feast in thanksgiving, because of the great importance it is for us to be grateful in order to receive of Him new

graces and favors. Now this is done very well in this third degree of humility, which, as has been said, consists in man's not attributing to himself any good thing, but attributing all to God and giving Him the glory of all. In this lies good and true gratitude and thanksgiving, not in saying with the lips: "I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for Thy benefits," although with our lips also we ought to praise God and give thanks. But if you do it only with your lips, it will not be "giving thanks," but "saying Thank you." That it may be not merely saying Thank you, but giving thanks, and that not only with the lips, but also in heart and deed, we must recognize that all the good that we have is of God; we must return and attribute all to Him, giving Him the glory without exalting ourselves in anything. In this way man strips himself of the honor, which he sees is not his own, and gives it all to God, to Whom it really belongs. And this is what Christ our Redeemer wished us to understand in the holy Gospel, when He had healed those ten lepers, and one alone returned to thank Him for the benefit he had received. *Were not ten made clean?* He said, *and none hath returned and given glory to God but this stranger* (Luke xvii. 17-18). And, admonishing the children of Israel to be grateful and not forget the benefits received, God calls their attention to this point: *Take care and not forget God, when thou enterest in the land of promise upon much prosperous fortune of temporal goods, houses, inheritances, and flocks. Take care that Thy heart then be not lifted up, and thou become ungrateful and say that by thine own strength and management thou hast come in for this* (Deut. viii. 11, 14, 17). This is forgetting God, the greatest ingratitude possible, attributing to oneself God's gifts. Let not such a thing enter into your thought, but remember God, and recognize that strength is His, and He has given you ability for all; and that He has done it, not for any merits of yours, but in fulfilment of the promise that He freely made to those fathers of old. This is

the gratitude and thanksgiving and sacrifice of praise wherewith God our Lord claims to be honored for the benefits and favors that He does us. *The sacrifice of praise shall honor me* (Psalm xlix. 23). *To God alone, King of ages, immortal and invisible, be given the glory of all* (I Tim. i. 17).

From this there follows another great gain and advantage, which is that the really humble man, though he hold many gifts of God and be on that account much regarded and esteemed by all the world, nevertheless does not esteem himself or make more of himself on that account, but remains as fixed in his own lowliness as if none of the things that are said of him were found in him. For he knows well how to distinguish between what belongs to another and what is his own, and to assign to each what belongs to him; and thus considering the gifts and benefits which he has received from God, he regards them not as his own property, but as another's property lent to him, and keeps his eyes always fixed on the knowledge of his own weakness and misery, thinking what would become of him if God withdrew His hand and were not ever upholding and preserving him. Rather, the more gifts he has received from God, the more is he confounded and humbled on that account.

St. Dorotheus says that, when trees are well laden with fruit, that same fruit makes the branches bend and bow downwards, and sometimes even break under the great weight they have to carry; but when a branch has no fruit on it, it stands straight lifted up on high; and ears of corn, when the wheat is well grained, bow down so that you think the stalk would break; but when the ears stand straight up, it is a bad sign, indicating that they are empty. So, he says, it happens in the spiritual world that those who are empty and void of fruit walk with a haughty mien and strut, but they who are laden with fruit and gifts of God walk in great humility and self-abasement. From the

very gifts and benefits that they have received, the servants of God take occasion to humble and abase themselves and walk in greater fear.

St. Gregory says that, as with him who has received a large sum of money on loan, though he rejoices in the sum lent him, yet his joy in what he has got is much allayed by the knowledge that he is bound to pay it back and the care and anxiety of thinking how he shall meet his bond in due time; so with the humble man, the more gifts he has received, the more he recognizes himself to be in God's debt, and thereby the more bound to His service. He thinks he is not answering greater benefits with greater services, greater graces with greater thanksgivings, and believes and takes it for granted that anyone to whom God has given what He has given to him, would be a better man than he is, more grateful, and would have made a much better use of God's gifts. And thus one of the considerations that makes the servants of God very humble and ashamed of themselves is this, that they know that God is sure to ask account of them not only of sins committed, but also of graces received—they know that *to whomsoever much is given, much shall be required of him; and to whom much is entrusted, of him they shall ask more*, as Christ our Redeemer says (Luke xii. 48). The Abbot Macarius says that the humble man regards the gifts of God as a depository or trustee, who holds property of his master, to whom no sentiment of vainglory occurs on that score, but rather fear and anxiety for the account that he knows they are sure to ask of him if by his fault the property is lost.

Hence also follows another good thing and advantage, that the truly humble man never despises anyone, nor slights him, however much he sees him fall into faults and sins; nor is he proud of himself at seeing such occurrences, nor takes himself for a better man than that other. Rather he takes occasion to humble himself more from seeing the other fall, considering that himself and the fallen

one are made of one clay, and that in the other's fall he falls so far as depends on him; since, as St. Augustine says, there is no sin that one man commits, which another man might not commit but for the hand of God lovingly holding him up. And so one of those ancient Fathers, when anyone had fallen, used to weep bitterly, saying, "Today for thee, and tomorrow for me." As he has fallen, so might I fall, since I am a weak man as he is; and that I have not so far fallen I owe to a particular favor of the Lord. The saints advise us, when we see a blind man, a deaf man, a cripple, a man who has lost a limb, or an invalid, we should take all these woes as marking favors done to us, and give thanks to God that he has not made me blind, nor deaf, nor maimed, nor dumb like that other. So we should reckon the sins of all men as marking favors done to us, because in all those cases I might have fallen if the Lord had not in His infinite mercy delivered me. Hereby the servants of God keep themselves in humility, and avoid disparaging their neighbors or being indignant with anyone, however many faults and sins they see in him, according to that saying of St. Gregory: "True righteousness makes us have compassion on our brother, false righteousness breeds disdain and indignation"—*Vera iustitia compassionem habet, falsa iustitia dedignationem*. Such proud people ought to fear what St. Paul says: *Rebuke him with mildness, lest it come about that thou also fall into temptation* (Gal. vi. 1). The Lord grant that they be not tempted in that same matter that they condemn, and come to prove to their cost how great is human weakness, that being the usual chastisement of this fault. In three things, said one of those ancient Fathers, did I judge my brethren, and I have fallen into all three myself—that we may know by experience that we also are men, and learn not to judge or despise anyone.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

*Of the Great Favors and Benefits That God Does to the
Humble, and What Is the Reason Why He
Exalts Them So Much*

ALL good things have come to me along with her (Wisdom vii. 11). These words Solomon says of the divine wisdom, that all good things have come along with her. But we may very well apply them to humility, and say that all good things come with her, since the same Wisdom says that *where there is humility, there is wisdom* (Prov. xi. 2). And elsewhere, that to keep this humility is *the height of wisdom* (Wisdom viii. 21). And the Prophet David, that *to the humble God giveth wisdom* (*sapientiam praeestans parvulis*, Psalm xviii. 8). But apart from this, Holy Writ teaches us this truth as well in the Old as in the New Testament, promising great blessings and graces of God, now to the humble, now to the little ones, now to the poor of spirit, calling the truly humble by these and other such names. *Upon whom shall I look*, says God by Isaias (lxvi. 2), *and upon whom shall I cast mine eyes, but upon the humble and the poor, and him who trembles and is abashed before me?* (*nisi ad pauperculum et contritum corde et trementem sermones meos*). On such people does God cast His eyes, to do them favors and fill them with good things. The glorious Apostles St. Peter and St. James in their canonical epistles say: *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble* (I Pet. v. 5; James iv. 6). The most holy Queen of Angels teaches us the same in her Canticle: *He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away* (Luke i. 52-53). And this is what the prophet had said before: *Thou wilt save the humble folk, and wilt cast down the eyes of the proud* (Psalm xvii. 28). It is what Christ says to us

in the holy Gospel: *Everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted* (Luke xiv. 11). As the waters run down to the valleys (Psalm ciii. 10), so the showers of God's graces go to the humble; and as the valleys, by the abundance of water that they gather in hollows, are usually fertile and yield good crops, so those who are lowly in God's eyes, that is, the humble, increase and yield much fruit by the many gifts and graces that they receive of God.

St. Augustine says that humility attracts to itself the Most High God: "God is high: if you humble yourself, He comes down to you; if you lift yourself up and are proud, He shuns you"—*Altus est Deus: humilias te, et descendit ad te: erigis te, et fugit a te*. Do you know why? he says. It is because God, the great and sovereign Lord, looks upon the humble, as the Royal Prophet says (Psalm cxxxvii. 6), and His looking upon them is to fill them with good things; but as for the proud, he says, He sees them from afar off; and as here when we see a thing afar off, we do not know it, so God does not know the proud to do them favors. *Verily I say to you, I know you not*, says God to the wicked and the proud (Matt. xxv. 12). St. Bonaventure says that, as soft wax is ready to receive in itself whatever impression one wishes to make on it, so the humble man disposes his soul to receive the virtues and gifts of God. In the feast that Joseph made for his brethren, the smallest received the greatest portion (Gen. xliii. 34).

But let us see what is the reason why God so exalts the humble and does them such great favors. The reason is because there nothing is lost; what is laid down all stays in the house. For the humble man is never elated at anything, never attributes anything to himself, but attributes and returns all entirely to God, and to Him gives the glory and honor of all. With these honest folk, says God, We can well deal; We can well trust in such hands Our property, and give them Our gifts and riches, because they will

not take them away from Us, nor exalt themselves thereupon. Thus God deals with them as with His own, because all the glory and honor remains His. So we see here on earth a king or great lord glories and takes for a display of his grandeur, to lift one, as they say, from the dust of the earth and deal with him who was nothing and had nothing; because thereby the liberality and greatness of the king comes out and is better seen, and they say then that So-and-So is of his making. So the Apostle says: *We hold the treasures of graces and gifts of God in earthen vessels* (II Cor. iv. 7), to give us to understand that these treasures are of God, and not of us, because earth and clay does not raise itself up.

It is for this reason, then, that God lifts up the humble and does them so many favors. And for this same reason He sends the proud empty away; because pride is self-confident, relying much on its own activities and contrivances, attributing much to itself, and taking vain satisfaction in the happy success of its enterprises as though it had done the business by its own strength and energies; all this is so much taking away from God, and appropriating that honor and glory which belongs to His Majesty. When we make a little way in prayer, with ever so little devotion and just one tiny tear, we fancy that we are spiritual folk and men of prayer. And even sometimes we set ourselves above others, thinking that they are not so advanced or not so spiritual, and are not getting forward at the rate that we are. This is why the Lord does not do us greater favors, and sometimes deprives us of what He had given, that we may not turn good into evil, health into sickness, medicine into poison, and gifts and benefits received into our greater condemnation by our bad use of them. To an invalid with a weak stomach, though the meat be good, let us say, chicken, they give only a little, because he has not strength to digest more; and if they gave him more, it would get corrupted and turned into bad humor. The oil of the Prophet

Eliseus never ceased to flow until there was a failure of vessels to receive it; they failing, Holy Scripture says the oil stopped at once (IV Kings iv. 6). Now that is the oil of divine mercy, which of itself is limitless; there is no limit to His graces and mercies. *The hand of the Lord is not shortened* (Isaias lix. 1). God has not narrowed nor drawn in His hand; He has not changed His nature, for God neither changes nor can change, but always remains in one condition and is more ready to give than we to receive. The fault lies with us, in that we have not empty vessels to receive the mercies and graces of God; we are too full of ourselves and trust too much in our own resources. Humility and self-knowledge loosen and detach a man from himself, making him resign all confidence in himself and in human means, and attribute to himself nothing, but all to God; and on such God bestows His favors in handfuls. *Humble thyself before God, and await his hands* (Ecclus. xiii. 9).

CHAPTER XXXIX

How Important It Is for Us to Betake Ourselves to Humility to Make Up Thereby for What Is Wanting to Us in Virtue and Perfection, and That God May Not Humble and Chastise Us

THE blessed St. Bernard says: "Very foolish is he who puts his trust in anything but an attitude of humility, seeing, brethren, that we have all sinned and offended God in many ways, and thus we have no right but to be punished"—*Apud Deum ius habere non possumus, quia in multis offendimus omnes*. If man should wish to enter into judgment with God, says Job (ix. 3), he will not be able to answer him one thing for a thousand, nor for a thousand charges to plead one good acquittal. "What, then, remains, and what other remedy avails us," continues St. Bernard,

"than to betake ourselves to humility, and supply thereby what is wanting to us in all the rest?" And on account of the great value of this remedy, the saint repeats it again and again in these and like words: "What is wanting to you in point of a good conscience, supply it by shame: and what you lack of fervor and perfection, supply it by blushes"—*Quidquid minus est fervoris, humilitas suppleat purae confessionis*. St. Dorotheus says that Abbot John also greatly recommended this, and used to say: "Brethren, when through our weakness we cannot labor so much as we would, let us at least humble ourselves, and thereby I trust we shall find ourselves ranked in the number of those who have labored." When after many sins you find yourself incapacitated by ill health from doing much penance, travel by this plain way of holy humility, for you will find no other more suitable means to your salvation. If it seems you cannot make head in meditation, make head in shame and confusion of yourself; and if it seems you have no talent for great things, go in for humility, and thereby you will make up the deficiency of all things else.

Let us consider, then, how little the Lord asks of us and with how little He is satisfied. He asks that we know and humble ourselves as befits our lowly estate. If God asked for great fasts, great penances, high contemplations, some might excuse themselves, saying that they have no strength for this one, nor talent nor capacity for the other; but there is no reason why anyone should excuse himself from being humble. You cannot say that you have not health or strength to be humble, or talent or capacity for that. St. Bernard says that nothing is easier for one who wishes than to humble himself. We can all do it, and we all have within ourselves matter enough for it. *Thy humiliation is in the midst of thee* (Mich. vi. 14). Let us, then, betake ourselves to humility, and recognize to our shame what is wanting to us of perfection, and in this way we may move the heart of God to mercy and pardon. Now that you are

poor, be humble, and with that you will satisfy God; but to be poor and proud offends Him greatly. Of three things that the Wise Man assigns as things that God much abhors, the first is *a man poor and proud* (Ecclus. xxv. 4). The like also offends men here on earth.

Further, let us humble ourselves that God may not humble us, a thing that He is wont to do very commonly. If, then, you wish that God may not humble you, humble yourself. This is a very important point and worthy of our very leisurely consideration and reflection. The blessed St. Gregory says: "Do you know how much God loves humility and how much He abhors pride and presumption? He abhors it so much that He permits us, to begin with, to fall into venial sins and many small faults, thereby to teach us that, as we cannot keep ourselves from small sins and temptations, but see ourselves stumbling and falling every day in things trifling and easy to overcome, we may be sure that we have not strength to avoid greater sins, and thus we may not become proud over these greater things, nor attribute anything to ourselves, but ever live in fear and humility, begging the Lord's grace and favor. The same says St. Bernard, and it is the common doctrine of the saints. St. Augustine on those words of St. John (i. 3), *and without him nothing was made*; and St. Jerome on that saying of the Prophet Joel: *I will give you back the years that the locust and the palmer worm, the mildew and the caterpillar have devoured* (Joel ii. 25), say that it was to humble man and tame his pride that God created these little animalculæ and small vile worms that are so troublesome to us. God could well have tamed and humbled that proud people of Pharaoh by sending them bears, lions, and snakes; but He chose to tame their pride with the vilest creatures, flies, gnats, and frogs, to humble them more.

Thus, then, that we may live in humility and confusion of face, God permits us to fall into trifling faults, and that

these little bits of temptations should sometimes make war upon us, these gnats, these petty affairs, that seem to have in them no body or bulk at all. If we stop to consider attentively what is apt to trouble and disturb us at times, we shall find that they are airy nothings, which, taken for what they are worth, have no body or substance whatever—some silly little word that they have said to us, or the tone in which they said it, or their failure, as we thought, to make enough account of us. Out of a fly skimming through the air one makes a windmill, and putting things together one comes to be very much disturbed and upset. How would it be if God sprang a tiger or a lion upon us, when a gnat is enough to make us so disturbed and restless? How would it be if there came a very severe temptation! Thus we must draw out of these things great humility and shame. And if you draw that, says St. Bernard, it is a mercy of God, and great benefit and bounty on His part, that little vexations do not fail to beset you, and that that is enough to make you humble.

But if these little things are not enough, understand that God will proceed further, to your heavy cost, as He is wont to do. God has such an abhorrence of pride and presumption and such a love for humility, that saints say that by a just and most secret judgment of His own He is apt to permit a man to fall into mortal sins as the price of his humiliation—and not into any sort of sins, but into sins of the flesh, which are the most frightful and foulest of all, for his greater humiliation. As they say, He chastises secret pride by manifest lust. They quote to this effect what St. Paul says of those proud philosophers, whom God for their pride gave over to the desires of their heart. They came to fall into sins of impurity most foul and unmentionable (Rom. i. 24, 26), God so permitting it for their pride, that they might be thoroughly confounded and humbled, seeing themselves turned into beasts, like Nabuchadonosor, with

the heart and conduct and behavior of beasts. *Who will not fear thee, O King of nations!* (Jerem. x. 7). Who will not tremble at this punishment so great that there is none greater outside of hell! And sin is even worse than hell. *Who knoweth, O Lord, the power of thine anger, and for fear can number thy wrath?* (Psalm lxxxix. 11).

The saints observe that God practises with us two sorts of mercy, one great and one small. It is a small mercy when He succors us in our small miseries, which are temporal miseries that touch only the body; and His great mercy, which succors us in our great miseries, which are spiritual and regard the soul. So when David saw himself in that great misery, forsaken and cast off by God for the adultery and murder that he had committed, he cries out in loud tones, begging of God great mercy: *Have pity upon me, O God, according to thy great mercy* (Psalm l. 3). So they say also that there is in God a great anger and a small anger. The small anger is when He chastises us here in the temporal order, with misfortunes and losses of property, honor, health, and other little things which touch only the body. But His great anger is when the chastisement reaches the interior of the soul, according to the words of Jeremy: *The sword hath pierced even to the heart* (Jerem. iv. 10). And this is what God says by the Prophet Zachary: *I am angry with great anger against the arrogant and proud nations* (i. 15). When God forsakes a man and lets him fall into mortal sins in punishment and chastisement for other sins, that is the great anger of God, these are the wounds of the divine fury, not of a Father, but of a just and rigorous Judge, of which may be understood that saying of Jeremy: *With the wound of an enemy I have struck thee, with a cruel castigation* (Jerem. xxx. 14). And so the Wise Man says: *A deep pit is the bad woman: he with whom God is angry shall fall into it* (Prov. xxii. 14).

Finally, pride is such an evil thing, and God abhors it so much, that the saints say that sometimes it is an advan-

tage to the proud man that God punishes him with this punishment, thereby to cure him of the pride that is in him. So says St. Augustine: "I make bold to say that it is useful and profitable for the proud that God should give them over to fall into some outward and manifest sin, that they may know themselves, and begin to humble themselves and lose confidence in themselves—they who for being well satisfied with themselves and wedded to their own ideas had already fallen by pride, although they did not feel it," according to the saying of the Wise Man: *Pride goeth before a fall, and before ruin the spirit is lifted up* (Prov. xvi. 18). St. Basil and St. Gregory say the same.

St. Gregory asks in reference to the sin of David, why God in dealing with those whom He has elected and predestined for life everlasting and exalted by His great gifts, permits them sometimes to fall into sin; yea, into fleshly and foul sins. And he answers that the reason of it is this, that sometimes those who have received great gifts fall into pride; this pride has taken such hold of the innermost regions of their heart that they themselves do not appreciate it, but, pleased with themselves and confident of themselves, they think it is of God. So it happened to the Apostle St. Peter, who did not think that it was pride that made him say those words: *Though all should be scandalized at thee, I will not be scandalized* (Matt. xxvi. 33). So, then, to cure them of all these fits of pride, so secret and disguised, into which they fall without knowing it, the Lord allows them to fall into such outward and manifest sins, so foul and shameful, because these sins are known better and more readily strike the eye; and by this means the man comes to be aware of the other malady which he had, the malady of secret pride all unbeknown to him, for which he would otherwise have sought no remedy, and so would have been lost; whereas by the manifest fall he comes to know it, humbles himself before God, and does penance both for the one sin and the other, and so finds remedy for both

ills. Thus we see in St. Peter that by the outward and manifest fall he came to know the hidden pride that had possessed him and to weep and do penance for both his sins, and so the fall did him good. The same happened to David, and so he says of himself: *It was a good thing that thou didst humble me, that I might learn thy just enactments* (Psalm cxviii. 71). Lord, it cost me dear, and I confess it; but it has been a good thing for me that I have been humbled, that I may learn how I ought to serve Thee henceforth, and how I ought to distrust myself. Thus, when a skilled physician is unable to cure a complaint altogether, and by reason of the humor's being malignant and obstinate he cannot dissipate and overcome it, he then makes it his aim to call and draw it out to the exterior parts of the body, the better to be able to deal with it. So the Lord, to heal certain haughty and rebellious souls, allows them to fall into grave exterior faults, to teach them to know themselves and to humble them; and by this outward breakdown the malignant and pestilent humor that was within is cured. These are God's great chastisements, the mere hearing of which makes the flesh creep. *Lo, I do a word in Israel such that whoever hears it, both his ears shall tingle* (I Kings iii. 11).

But, after all, since the Lord is so kind and merciful that He does not make use of this so rigorous punishment, this unhappy and lamentable expedient, without having used other and gentler means, He first sends us other occasions and other softer and gentler remedies to humble us. Sometimes it is sickness, sometimes contradiction and complaint, sometimes disgrace and loss of dignity. And when these temporal things do not suffice to make us humble, He passes on to spiritual things. First to little things, and after that permitting violent and strong temptations, going so far as to make us hang on a thread, and persuade us or make us doubt whether we consent, that thus the man may see and have clear experience that of himself he cannot overcome

them, and may know and understand by experience his weakness and the need he has of divine grace, and distrust his own powers and humble himself. And when all this is not enough, then comes that further treatment, so violent and costly, of letting the man be overcome by temptation and fall into mortal sin. Then comes, I say, the cautery, which they call the "fiery button" of hell, that now at least, being thus browbeaten [*quebrado los ojos*, knocked in the eye], the man may make a reckoning with himself what he really is and humble himself at last, since under the milder treatment he had no mind to do so.

Hereby we see how much it imports us to be humble and not trust in ourselves. Wherefore let everyone take account of himself and see how he profits by the occasions that God sends to humble him, acting as a most tender father and physician, to the end that there may be no need of those other remedies, so violent and so costly. Chastise me, O Lord, with the chastisement of a father; cure my pride with hardships, illnesses, insults and affronts, and by all the humiliations Thou shalt please, and permit me not to fall into mortal sin. Give leave, O Lord, to the devil to wound me in honor and in health, and make me like another Job; but give him not leave to touch my soul. Provided, O Lord, that Thou depart not from me, nor permit me to depart from Thee, any tribulation that may come upon me will do me no harm, but rather help me to gain the humility in which Thou dost take such pleasure.

CHAPTER XL

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

SULPICIUS SEVERIN relates, and Surius in the "Life of St. Severinus Abbot," the story of a holy man very distinguished for virtues and miracles, who healed the sick,

cast out devils from bodies, and did many other wonderful things, on which account all the world flocked to him, and there came to visit him titled noblemen and bishops, who thought it a happiness to touch his clothes and receive his blessing. On account of these things the holy man felt that there was beginning to enter into his head a certain vanity. And seeing on the one hand that he could not hinder the concourse of people, and on the other that he could not free himself from those importunate thoughts of vanity, he was much afflicted; and, putting himself one day in prayer, he asked our Lord with much earnestness for a remedy to this temptation, and that, in order that he might keep himself in humility, His Majesty would permit and give leave to the devil to enter into his body for some time and torment him like other possessed persons. God heard his prayer, and the devil entered into him; and it was matter of horror and wonderment to see that man, to whom a little time before they used to bring possessed persons for him to cure them, bound with chains like a madman and demoniac and taken accordingly to have exorcisms read over him, and all the rest that is usually done with such people. He was in this state for five months; and at the end of them, the story says, he was cured and free, not only from the devil who entered into his body, but from the pride and vanity that was entering into his soul.

Surius relates another similar example. He says that the holy Abbot Severinus had in his monastery three arrogant monks, bitter with pride and vanity. He had warned them thereof, and they were obstinate in their fault. The saint, in his desire to see them amended and humble, begged the Lord with tears to correct them and chastise them with some chastisement that would humble and amend them. And before he had risen from his prayer, the Lord permitted three devils to get possession of them and torment them violently, confessing with loud cries their pride and arrogance of heart. It was a chastisement proportioned

to their fault, that the spirit of pride should enter and dwell in subjects proud and full of vanity. And because the Lord saw that nothing else would humble them so much, they remained in that state for forty days, at the end of which the saint begged the Lord to deliver them from the power of the devil. He gained his petition, and they became sound in body and soul, and well humbled by this chastisement of the Lord.

Caesarius relates that they brought to a Cistercian convent a possessed person to be cured. The prior went out, and took with him a young religious of great reputation for virtue, whom he knew to be a virgin. The prior said to the devil: "If this monk bids you go out, will you dare to stay?" The devil answered: "I fear him not, because he is proud."

St. John Climacus relates that one time the wicked devils began to sow certain seeds of praises in the heart of a most valiant soldier of Christ, who was zealous for this virtue of humility. But he, moved by the inspiration of God, found that a very short cut for overcoming the notice of these perverse spirits was this: He wrote on the walls of his cell the names of some of the highest virtues—*Perfect Charity, Most Profound Humility, Angelic Chastity, Most Pure and High Prayer*, and the like; and when those evil thoughts began to tempt him, he would answer the devil: "Let us put the matter to the proof." Then he would read all those titles. "‘Most Profound Humility.’ I have not got it; we should be only too happy if it were *profound*; but I do not know that we have yet done with the first degree. ‘Perfect Charity.’ Charity, yes; but perfect? Mine is not very perfect, since I sometimes speak to my brothers in screaming and rough accents. ‘Angelic Chastity.’ No, I have many evil thoughts, and sometimes feel evil motions in my flesh. ‘Most High Prayer.’ No, I sleep and am much distracted over it." Then he would say to himself: "After you have gained all those virtues, you must still say

to yourself: 'I am a useless and unprofitable servant,' according to those words of Christ our Redeemer: *When ye have done all things that were commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants* (Luke xvii. 10)." What, then, must you be, you who are so far short of that perfection?

TWELFTH TREATISE



CHAPTER I

That Temptations Cannot Fail to Come in This Life

SON, entering on the service of God, stand in righteousness and fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation (Ecclus. ii. 1). St. Jerome on that text of Ecclesiastes, *A time of war, and a time of peace* (Eccles. iii. 8), says that the time of war is while we are in this world, and the time of peace will be when we pass out into the next. And hence our heavenly city takes its name of Jerusalem, which signifies *Vision of Peace*. "Let no one, therefore," he says, "fancy himself secure in time of war, where fighting is the word and apostolic weapons have to be wielded, if we wish to be victorious and rest in peace some day." St. Augustine on the words of St. Paul: *I do not the good that I would, but the evil that I would not, that I do: I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and leading me captive to the law of sin that is in my members* (Rom. vii. 19, 23), says that the life of the just man here is a conflict and not a triumph; hence we hear the notes of war sounded by the Apostle, marking the contradiction of his flesh and its great inclination to evil; but the note of triumph shall be heard afterwards, when this corruptible and mortal body shall have put on incorruption and immortality. And the note of triumph shall be: *O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?* (I Cor. xv. 55). Job puts it well in these words: *Man's life is a warfare upon earth, and his days as those of one who works for his daily hire* (Job vii. 1). For as it is the part of the day laborer to work and weary himself all day long, and then follows reward and repose, so also with us the day of this life is full of labors and temptations, and reward and rest will be given us according as we shall have labored.

Coming down in particular to examine the cause of this continual war, the Apostle St. James puts it: *Whence are wars and strifes in you? Is it not from this, from your lusts that war in your members?* (James iv. 1). We have in ourselves the cause and root, which is the rebellion and contradiction to all good which dwells in our flesh in consequence of sin; the earth of our flesh has been put under a curse, and thus brings forth thorns and thistles that prick and torment us continually. The saints bring in to this purpose the comparison of a ship which sets sail, and thereupon the sea grows angry and rises in a storm and high waves that threaten to engulf the vessel; so is our soul in this vessel of the body, leaky, full of holes, springing a leak here, while on the other side there arise waves and tempests of many disorderly movements and appetites, which threaten to drown and swallow it up. *The body that is corrupted weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15).

Thus the cause of our continual temptations is the corruption of our nature, that *fomes peccati*, or incentive to sin, and the evil inclination which remains with us in consequence of sin. Our greatest enemy dwells in our house, and it is he that makes upon us continual war. Thus there is nothing to amaze a man when he sees himself molested by temptations; for after all he is a child of Adam, conceived and born in sin, and he can never cease to have temptations, and evil inclinations and appetites making war upon him. Thus St. Jerome observes that in the Our Father Christ our Lord does not teach us to pray that we may have no temptations, for that is impossible, but that we may not fall under temptation. And elsewhere Christ said to His disciples: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). Entering into temptation, says St. Jerome, is not being tempted, but being overcome by temptation: *in tentationem intrare non est tentari, sed vinci*. The holy patriarch Joseph was tempted to adultery, but was not overcome by the temptation. The chaste

Susanna was tempted in the same way, but by the aid of the Lord did not fall under the temptation. "You are mistaken, brother," says St. Jerome, writing to Heliodorus, "you are laboring under a great mistake, if you think that a Christian can ever go without persecution. Then are you most assailed, when you do not know that you are being assailed." *Our adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour* (I Pet. v. 8); and do you take yourself to be at peace? *He sitteth in ambush to kill the innocent, he sets his eyes upon the poor, he lies in wait for them like a lion in his den* (Psalm ix. 29-30); and do you fancy yourself secure? That is a delusion, for this life is a time of war and conflict. To be frightened at temptations is as if a soldier were to take fright at hearing a musket shot and want to get out of the war for that; or as if a sailor were to jump overboard because the ship rolls and pitches and turns his stomach.

St. Gregory says it is a delusion of some folk, when any grave temptation assails them, to think straightway that all is lost and that God has forgotten them and they are in His disgrace. A great delusion this; on the contrary you must understand that to be tempted is not only the ordinary lot of men, but is a thing that especially befalls men who are aiming at virtue and perfection. *All who would live piously in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution*, says the Apostle (II Tim. iii. 12). Others often do not know what temptation is; they cannot see the rebellion and war which the flesh makes on the spirit; rather they take it for a dainty morsel. St. Augustine remarks this well on those words of St. Paul: *The flesh lusteth against the spirit* (Gal. v. 17). "It is in the good that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, for in the bad it has nothing to lust against; there only does it lust against the spirit where there is spirit." So the devil need not lose his time in tempting such people, for without any doing of his they of their own accord follow him and surrender themselves to him without difficulty

or contradiction. Hunters do not go a-hunting after cattle, but after stags and bucks, who run lightly and take to the hills. It is for those who are running with the lightness of stags to the height of perfection that the devil goes hunting with his nets and temptations; but as for those others who live like cattle, he has them already in his stall and has no need to hunt for them. "He is at no pains to assail those of whom he feels already that he is in undisturbed possession," says St. Gregory. And therefore we should not only not be dismayed at temptations, but rather take them for a good sign, as St. John Climacus observes. "There is no surer sign," he says, "that the devils are being beaten by us, than their assailing us most vigorously." They do it because you have revolted from them and gone out of their jurisdiction; therefore does the devil persecute you, because he envies you: otherwise he would not persecute you so much.

CHAPTER II

How Some Are Tempted at the Beginning of Their Entry into Religion, or into the Church, Others Afterwards

THE blessed St. Gregory observes that some begin to feel this war of temptations at the beginning of their entry into religion, when they first set to work at recollection and the pursuit of virtue. He quotes to this effect the example of Christ our Redeemer, Who wished to prefigure this condition of things and sketch it in outline in His own person by an admirable dispensation, since He did not allow the devil to tempt Him till after He had been baptized and had retired into the desert to fast and pray and do penance; then Holy Writ tells us that the devil came up to tempt Him. Hereby He designed, says St. Gregory, to warn those who were to be His members and His sons to be on the lookout for temptations when they proceed to recollect themselves and give themselves to virtue, because

it is quite the way of the devil to operate on those lines. When the children of Israel went out of Egypt, Pharaoh at once got together his army and all his power to go against them. Laban again, when Jacob went away from him, followed him with a great troop and burning indignation. And when the devil went out of that man mentioned in Holy Scripture (Luke xi. 26), it says that he took with him seven other spirits worse than himself to return into him, as if making a levy against a rebel and going out to subject him once more. So the devil, when anyone rebels against him and seeks to escape from his domination and subjection, is then more kindled to wrath and shows himself more fierce and seeks to make greater war. St. Gregory quotes to this purpose what the Evangelist St. Mark says, when Christ our Redeemer cast out that unclean deaf-and-dumb spirit: *With loud cries and much tearing of him he went out of him* (Mark ix. 25). The saint says: "Observe that, while the devil possessed the man, he did not tear him; and when by the divine power he was being compelled to go out of him, then he tore him;" that we might understand that the devil then tries to trouble and molest us with temptations when we are going away from him.

Apart from this, St. Gregory says that the Lord permits and wishes us to be tempted at the beginning of our religious life that no one may fancy that he is a saint for having left off his evil life and taken to a good one, thoughts which readily occur to people in that condition; and that the security of the good life that he has taken up may not make him negligent and slack. To that end God permits temptations to come upon him, to put before his eyes the danger he still is in, and rouse and waken him up to be diligent and careful. St. John Climacus says the novelty of a new life is wont to be irksome to him who has been accustomed to an evil life; and in the embrace of virtue there is manifested and felt the contradiction and war of vice fighting against the same, as the bird, trying to escape from the

snare, then feels that it is caught. Thus no one should be affrighted or dismayed at feeling difficulties and temptations at the beginning, since it is quite the ordinary thing.

St. Gregory adds that sometimes one who has left the world and an evil life and begun to serve God, has temptations such as he never felt before his conversion; this, however, he says is not because there was not in him before the root of those temptations which he had in him, but because it did not appear and show itself then, and now it shows itself. When a man is very much taken up with other thoughts and all sorts of cares, he often does not know himself nor take cognizance of what passes within him; but when he begins to recollect himself and enter into himself, then he comes to see the roots of evil that are germinating in his heart. It is, the saint says, like the thistle that grows on the road and does not come into view while all tread upon it who pass that way; still, though the pricks do not come out, the root remains covered up in the ground, and when passers-by cease to tread on them, they forthwith sprout and come out. So, he says, in worldly people the root of temptations often lies concealed and does not show itself externally, since, like that thistle on the road, it is trodden upon and crushed, as by wayfarers' feet, by the diversity of thoughts that come and go and by numerous cares and occupations. But when one goes apart from all that and recollects himself to serve God, then, as there is no one to tread on the thistle, there appears that which was hidden away there before, and the pricks of temptation springing from that evil root are felt. Thus a person's experiencing in religion temptations such as he never had before his entry is not because of his being a worse man now than when he was in the world, but because then the man did not see or know himself, and now he begins to see and know his evil inclinations and disorderly appetites; thus what he has to aim at is not the hiding or covering up of the root, but the rooting of it out.

Others there are, says St. Gregory, who at the beginning of their religious life are not assailed with temptations, but rather feel much peace, sweetnesses, and consolations; and afterwards, as time goes on, the Lord tries them with temptations: so His Divine Majesty has arranged, with divine knowledge and contrivance, that the path of virtue may not seem to them rough and difficult and they lose heart and go back again to what they had left a little before. Thus He acted with His people when He led them out of Egypt; He did not take them by the land of the Philistines, which was hard by, for the reason that Holy Writ gives, *lest perchance, seeing wars spring up against them, they might repent of having gone out of Egypt, and return thither again* (Exod. xiii. 17). But at the beginning God did them many favors, working great marvels and miracles on their behalf; but by the time that they had crossed the Red Sea and were in the desert, and could not go back, He proved them with many hardships and trials before their entry into the Land of Promise. So, says the saint, in dealing with those who leave the world, God rids them sometimes of wars and temptations at the outset, that, being yet tender in virtue, they may not get frightened thereby and return to the world. He takes them through pleasant places at the beginning and gives them consolations and sweetnesses, that, having tasted the delight and pleasantness of the way of God, they may better afterwards bear the war and molestation of temptations and hardships, all the more the more they have tasted of God and come to know how well He deserves to be served and loved. So with St. Peter, the Lord first showed him the beauty and splendor of His glory in the Transfiguration, and then permitted him to be tempted by the servant-maid's question, whether he was a disciple of Christ, that, humbled by temptation, weeping and loving, he might learn to strengthen and aid himself by the sight he had formerly seen on Mount Thabor; and as fear had overthrown him, so

the delight of the sweetness and goodness of God which he had experienced, might raise him up.

Hence, says St. Gregory, will be understood a mistake commonly made by those who are just entering on the service of God. Finding themselves sometimes in so much peace and quiet—the Lord doing them the favor of opening out to them the way of meditation—finding, too, the exercises of virtue and mortification easy, they fancy that they have attained perfection, not understanding that these are the sweetmeats of children and beginners, and that the Lord gives these gratuities to wean them from the things of the world. Sometimes, says the saint, God communicates Himself more abundantly to less perfect souls and souls that have not advanced so much in virtue, not because they deserve these consolations, but because they are in greater need of them. It is the way that an earthly father acts, who, while greatly loving all his sons, seems not to make account of those who are in health; but if any of them is ill, he not only provides medicines for his cure, but also things that make for comfort and ease. And as a gardener, while new plantations are tender, waters them frequently and with extra care, but once they are strong and have taken firm root, he leaves off this watering and extra care, so the Divine Goodness observes this method of management with weaklings and babes and beginners.

The saints also say that sometimes God gives more consolations to those who have sinned more, and seems to do them more particular kind turns and favors than to those who have always led a good life, that the former may not lose confidence and hope, and the latter may not grow proud. This is well set forth in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke xv. 23), and in the feasting, music, and rejoicing with which his father received him, killing the fatted calf and making a great banquet; whereas to the elder son, who had spent all his life serving him and had never transgressed his command, he had never given so

much as a kid to make merry with his friends; because *the healthy are in no need of a physician, but the sick*, as the same Lord says (Matt. ix. 12).

CHAPTER III

Why the Lord Wishes Us to Have Temptations, and of the Utility and Profit That Ensue Upon Them

THE Lord your God tempteth you, that it may be made manifest whether ye love him or not with your whole heart and your whole soul, says the Holy Spirit in Deuteronomy (xiii. 3). The blessed St. Augustine raises a question on those words. How, he says, does Holy Scripture say that God tempts us; and on the other hand the Apostle St. James says in his canonical epistle (i. 13): *God tempteth no man*? He answers that there are two ways of tempting. One is to deceive and make fall into sin, and in that way God tempts no man, only the devil, whose office it is so to do, according to what the Apostle St. Paul says: *Let it not be that the tempter hath tempted you* (I Thess. iii. 5); where the gloss says, "that is, the devil, whose office it is to tempt." Another way of tempting there is, to prove and gain experience of a person, and in this way it is that Holy Scripture says that God tempts and proves us. And in Genesis (xxii. 1) it is said: *God tempted and proved Abraham*. The Lord gives us a touch, and many touches, that we may know and understand that that is the measure of our love and fear of God. And so the same God said thereupon to Abraham, when he put his hand to the knife to sacrifice his son: *Now I know that thou fearest God* (Gen. xxii. 12); that is, as St. Augustine explains: "Now I have made thee know that thou fearest God." Thus, while there are some temptations sent us by the Lord from His own hand, there are others permitted to come upon us by means of our enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh.

But what is the reason why the Lord permits and wills that we should have temptations? St. Gregory, Cassian, and others treat this point very well. They say in the first place that it is profitable for us to be tempted and afflicted, and for the Lord to at times withdraw His hand a little way from us; were it not so, the prophet would not say to God: *Do not abandon me entirely* (Psalm cxviii. 8). But because he knew very well that the Lord is wont at times to leave His servants and withdraw His hand a little way from them for their greater good and profit, he does not ask God never to leave him, nor ever withdraw His hand from him, but never to abandon him entirely. And in the Twenty-Sixth Psalm he says: *Withdraw not in anger from thy servant*. He does not ask God never to withdraw from him at any time and in any way, but not to withdraw from him *in anger*, or forsake him so far as to let him come to fall into sin; but as for proving him and sending him temptations and trials, he rather asks for it. *Prove me, O Lord, and try me* (Psalm xxv. 2). And by Isaias the same Lord says: *A little, for an instant, I have forsaken thee, and in great mercies will I gather thee: in a moment of indignation I have hidden my face from thee, and in everlasting mercy have I had mercy on thee* (Isaias liv. 7-8).

But let us see in particular the benefits and advantages that accrue to us from temptations. Cassian says that God deals with us as He dealt with the children of Israel. He would not entirely destroy the enemies of His people, but left in the Land of Promise those enemies of His people, those tribes of Canaanites, Amorrheans, Jebusites, and so forth, to teach and exercise His people, that security might not make them fall into idleness, but they should be valiant men of war—*habere consuetudinem praeliandi* (Judges iii. 1). So, he says, the Lord wishes that we should have enemies and be assailed by temptations, that we should have practice in fighting and not take harm from idleness or prosperity; for oftentimes the devil deceives

and overthrows by a false sense of security those whom he has not been able to overcome by open fighting.

St. Gregory says that by a high and secret disposition of His providence the Lord wishes the good and the elect to be tempted and afflicted in this life; because this life is a road, or to speak better, an exile, whereby we journey and make our pilgrimage until we reach our heavenly country; and whereas some travelers, when they see on their way sundry meadows and woodlands, are apt to stop and turn off from the road, therefore the Lord has wished that this life should be full of trials and temptations, to prevent our setting our heart and love on it, or taking our land of exile for our country, and make us continually sigh for home. St. Augustine gives the same reason, and says that temptations and trials go to show us the misery of this life, that we may more ardently long for that life of heavenly bliss and seek after it with greater diligence and fervor. And in another place he says it is "that we may not love the stable"—*ne viator stabulum amet pro domo sua*—and forget those royal palaces for which we were created. When the nurse wishes to wean the child and teach it to eat bread, she puts aloes on her breasts; so God mingles bitterness with the things of this life to detach men from them and make them with all their heart and desire long after heaven. And St. Gregory: "The evils that beset and oppress us here make us have recourse and turn to God."

CHAPTER IV

Of Other Benefits and Advantages That Temptations Bring with Them

BLESSED is the man that suffereth temptation, and was well approved therein, *because he shall receive the crown of life* (James i. 12). On these words St. Bernard says: "Temptations needs must come; for *who shall be*

crowned but he who hath lawfully fought? (II Tim. ii. 5). And if there are no temptations, who shall fight, having no adversary to fight with?" All the benefits and advantages which Holy Writ and the saints tell us of in their sermons on trials and adversities, and they are innumerable—all these advantages temptations bring in their train. One of them, and a chief one of all, is that which the words above quoted say. The Lord sends us them that we may afterwards win a greater reward and crown in the glory of heaven, *since through many tribulations must we enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 21). This is the royal road to heaven—temptations, tribulations, and adversities. And so in the Apocalypse one of those ancients, showing St. John the great glory of the saints, said to him: *These are they that are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14). By the way, St. Bernard asks, how does he say that they have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, seeing that blood is not apt to whiten but to color? They came out white, he says, because along with the blood from the side there issued forth also water, and that whitened them. Or if we do not say that, he says that they changed to white, because the blood of that tender and spotless Lamb was like a white and ruddy milk, according to the saying of the spouse in the Canticles: *My beloved is white and ruddy, chosen among a thousand* (Cant. v. 10).

Thus it is that through blood in tribulations entrance is gained into the kingdom of heaven. Stones here are hewn, cut, and finished off to get them to lie flat in their place in the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, since there is neither hammer nor blow of hammer (III Kings vi. 7). And the better and more conspicuous the place where the stones are to be laid, the more do they pick and shape them. And as the stone over the doorway is usually most elaborately picked and finished off because the entrance is what most strikes the eye, so Christ our Lord, becoming the new gate

of heaven, which hitherto had been closed, would be most of all beaten with blows of the hammer—as also to the end that we sinners should feel ashamed to enter by a gate cut and shaped with so many tribulations and afflictions, without first suffering some blows ourselves, that we may be knocked into shape.

Stone that is to be thrown into the foundation is not usually cut stone; so those who are to be thrown below into the depth of hell have no need of being wrought and hammered. Let them make merry here in this life; let them gratify their whims and appetites; let them do their own will; let them give themselves up to good cheer, since with that they will be paid all their due. But they who are destined to go and repair the ruins of the evil angels and to fill those seats that they lost by their pride, must be hewn into shape by afflictions and temptations. St. Paul says: *If we are sons, we shall be heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, yet so that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him* (Rom. viii. 17). And the angel said to Toby: *Because thou wert acceptable to God, and He wished thee well, therefore he wished to try thee with temptation* (Tob. xii. 13), that so thy recompense and reward might be greater. And of Abraham, the Wise Man says that *God tried him and found him faithful* (Ecclus. xliv. 21); and because He found him faithful, constant, and brave under temptation, therefore He offered him reward and promised him under oath to multiply his generation like the stars in heaven and the sands on the seashore. It is for this, then, that the Lord sends us trials and temptations, to give us a greater reward and a richer crown. And so the saints say that God does us a greater favor in sending us temptations, giving us at the same time grace to overcome them, than if He were entirely to deliver us from them, because at that rate we should miss the reward and glory that we merit thereby.

St. Bonaventure adds to this another reason, that the Lord, loving us so much, is not satisfied with our gaining glory, and great glory, in heaven, but wishes us to gain it quickly, and not to have to detain us in purgatory; and therefore He sends us here afflictions and temptations, which are His hammer and forge whereby the rust and dross is cleared off our soul and it is cleansed and purified so as to be able to enter at once into enjoyment of God. *Take away the dross from the silver, and a most pure vessel will come forth* (Prov. xxv. 4). And this is no small favor and benefit, to say nothing of the gain that we make by commuting so great and severe a punishment as we should otherwise have to suffer there into the little or nothing, comparatively speaking, that we suffer in this life.

Moreover, Holy Scripture is full of the fact that the prosperities of this life separate the soul from God, whereas adversities and afflictions are the occasion of drawing her to God. What but prosperity made Pharaoh's cupbearer so quickly forget his interpreter Joseph (Gen. xl. 23)? What but prosperity made King Ozias proud, after such fair beginnings (II Chron. xxvi. 16)? What made Nabuchodonosor, or Solomon, or David vain enough to number the people? And when the children of Israel saw themselves in high power, thanks to the great favors and benefits that the Lord had done them, then they deteriorated and forgot God the more (Deut. xxxii. 15).

On the other hand, the prophet says that in trouble men return to God. *Cover, O Lord, their face with ignominy, and straightway they will seek thy protection* (Psalm lxxxii. 17). *They cried to the Lord in their affliction* (Psalm cvi. 13). *When the Lord sent them the pestilence, then they sought him and were converted to him, and rose early in the morning to meet him* (Psalm lxxvii. 34). When Nabuchodonosor was changed into a beast—whether it were in sober reality or in imagination—then he knew God (Dan. iv. 31). What a much better man David was under the

persecution of Saul, Absalom, and Semei than in his walk in the public place and covered way! So afterwards, like one who has been well under the knife, he says: *We have rejoiced for the days in which thou didst humble us, for the years in which we suffered hardships* (Psalm lxxxix. 15). *It is good for me that thou didst humble me* (Psalm cxviii. 71). Oh, what a good thing it has been for me, O Lord, to have been humbled and afflicted! How many have been cured by this treatment who otherwise would have perished! When the thorn of tribulation and temptation pricks, then one enters into oneself, is converted, and returns to God (Psalm xxxi. 4). Even in the world they say that the fool is made a wise man by punishment. And it is the pronouncement of the Holy Ghost by Isaias (xxviii. 19): *It is only suffering that openeth the eyes of understanding*. And more clearly by the Wise Man: *A severe illness maketh the soul sober* (Ecclus. xxxi. 2). Severe illness, afflictions, and adversities bring a man to reason. A man is living in prosperity free and unbroken, like a young bull that is to be tamed—*quasi iuvenculus indomitus* (Jerem. xxxi. 18); God flings over him the yoke of tribulation and temptation to quieten him down. The angel cured Toby with the gall of the fish (Tob. xi. 13), and with clay Christ gave sight to the blind (John ix. 6). For this, then, the Lord sends us temptations, which count among the number of really great trials and are most sensibly felt by spiritual men. As for those other material trials, such as losses of property, illnesses, and the like, for the servants of God, who are bent upon spiritual things, they are a very light matter, falling well outside their concern; for all that sort of thing only touches the body, and so they do not take much account of it. But when the trouble is interior and reaches the soul, as temptation does, which goes to separate them from God and seems to put them in danger and risk of losing Him, that is a thing they feel much, and makes them cry out with a cry as loud as that of the Apostle St. Paul when he

felt this war and contradiction of the flesh, seeking to drag the spirit away with it: Woe is me, that evil carries me away with it; and the good I fain would do, I do not succeed in putting into execution! Who will deliver me from this captivity and servitude! (Rom. vii. 24).

CHAPTER V

That Temptations Avail Us Greatly to Know and Humble Ourselves, and Have More Recourse to God

TEMPTATIONS are further fraught with another great benefit and advantage; they make us know ourselves. "We often do not know what we can do, but temptation shows us what we are," says that holy man (Å Kempis). This knowledge of ourselves is the foundation stone of the whole spiritual edifice. Without it nothing durable can be built; and with it the soul rises like foam, because she knows how to take her stand on God, in Whom she can do all things. Now temptations lay open to man his weakness and ignorance, whereas up to then his eyes were closed both to the one and the other, and so he was unable to think poorly of himself, because he had not had this experience. But when a man sees that a breath of wind knocks him over, that at a mere nothing he stops benumbed, that when a temptation comes upon him he is disconcerted and gets into a heat, and counsel and good sense at once desert him and darkness envelops him—he begins then to moderate his high presumptions and to humble and think meanly of himself. If we had no temptations, we should thereupon have considerable conceit of ourselves and fancy ourselves very valiant; but when temptation comes, and man sees himself on the point of falling and apparently within the thickness of a penny-piece of plunging into the abyss, then he knows his weakness and humbles himself. Therefore St. Paul says (II Cor. xii. 7): "That the fact of

my having been caught up to the third heaven, and the great revelations that I had had, might not move me to pride, the Lord permitted me to be tempted, that I might know what I was of my own self and humble myself accordingly."

Hence follows another great benefit and advantage, which is that, as a man knows his weakness, he comes thereby to know the need that he has of the favor and help of the Lord, and of having recourse to Him in prayer, and ever clinging to Him as to his remedy and refuge, according to that saying of the prophet: *Oh, how good it is for me to draw nigh to the Lord, and never go far from him—mihi adhaerere Deo bonum est*—(Psalm lxxii. 28). And as a mother, when she wishes her boy to come to her, gets other people to frighten him, that he may be under the necessity of going to her lap, so the Lord permits the devil to alarm and frighten us with his temptations, that we may have recourse to His lap and protection; or, as Gerson says, *to provoke us as the eagle provokes her young to fly* (Deut. xxxii. 11); or as a mother lets go of her child for a short interval that he may call on her more earnestly, seek her more diligently, embrace her more closely, and she in her turn may fondle him more affectionately—*quo instantius ille clamet, accuratius quaerat, arctius stringat, et illa vicissim blandiatur suavius*. St. Bernard says that the Lord at times loosens His hold on the soul that she may cry out to Him with more longing and fervor and hold fast to Him more strongly. So He did with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, pretending that He wished to go further forward, that they might importune and detain him. *Stay with us, since the evening is coming on, and the day is waning* (Luke xxiv. 29).

Thence it comes also that a man sets more store by the favor and protection of the Lord, seeing the need that he has of it. St. Gregory says that on this account it is expedient for us that the Lord should withdraw His hand just

a little from us, since if we always alike enjoyed His protection, we should not esteem it so much or take it to be so necessary; but when God leaves us a little to ourselves and we think we are going to fall, and then see that He gives us His hand at once—*If the Lord had not come to my aid, my soul had almost dwelt in hell* (Psalm xciii. 17)—then we set a high value on His favor, and become more grateful, and recognize better His goodness and mercy. *In whatever day I call on thee, I at once know that thou art my God* (Psalm lv. 10). One cries to God in temptation, and feels His aid and experiences the faithfulness of His Majesty in the good protection that He affords in time of need. So one recognizes Him for Father and Defender, and is inflamed more with His love and breaks out into His praises, as the children of Israel did when the Egyptians went in pursuit of them, and they beheld themselves on the far side of the sea, and the enemy drowned (Exod. xv. 1). Hence also it comes that one does not attribute any good thing to oneself, but attributes all to God and gives Him the glory of all, which is another great benefit and advantage arising out of temptations, and a great remedy against them, as also a means of gaining great favors and rewards from the Lord.

CHAPTER VI

That in Temptations the Just Are Further Proved and Purified, and Take Root Better in Virtue

THE saints further say that the Lord would have us tempted to prove our virtue. As in winds and tempests it appears whether a tree is well rooted, and as the valor and strength of a knight and good soldier is not brought to light in time of peace, but in time of war, in encounters and conflicts, so the virtue and strength of a servant of God is not evidenced in time of devotion and comfort, but under

temptations and trials. On the words: *I am ready and not afraid to keep thy commandments* (Psalm cxviii. 60), St. Ambrose says that, as he is the better pilot and worthy of greater praise who has the knowledge and skill to steer a ship in time of tempests and squalls, when the ship seems now to be going to the bottom and now to be lifted up by the waves sky-high, rather than one who can steer and guide it in time of calm and fine weather; so he deserves greater praise who is able to steer and guide himself in time of temptations, in such way that neither does prosperity lift him up to pride, nor adversity and trial frighten and dismay him. Therefore does God send temptations, as He dealt with the people of Israel, allowing hostile tribes to dwell around them, *that in them he might make trial of Israel, whether they would hear the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses* (Judges iii. 4). And the Apostle Paul says: *Divisions must needs arise, that they who are approved may be made manifest among you* (I Cor. xi. 19). *God hath tried them and found them worthy of himself* (Wisdom iii. 5). Temptations are the strokes whereby God discovers the fineness of the metal; they are the touchstones whereby He tests His friends; thereby He comes to see what stuff each one is made of. And as men on earth like to have trusty and tried friends, so also does God, and therefore He proves them.

As vessels are proved in the furnace, says the Wise Man, and silver and gold in the fire, so are the just proved in temptation (Ecclus. xxvii. 6). St. Jerome says: When a mass of metal is burning in the fire, it does not show itself whether it is gold, or silver, or any other metal, since it is then all of one color and seems all fire; so in time of consolation, while fervor and devotion last, all has the look of fire, and the nature of the individual does not appear: but draw the mass out of the fire, let it cool, and you will see what it is. Let that fervor and consolation pass; let trial and temptation come; and then the stuff that each individ-

ual is made of will come to light. When in time of peace a man takes the way of virtue, one does not know whether that is virtue, or whether it springs from a good natural disposition or some particular relish that he has for the exercise and the absence of rival attractions; but when he perseveres under the assaults of temptation, it shows well that he does things on the motive of virtue and love of God.

Temptation also serves to purify a man more. As the goldsmith purifies silver and gold by fire and rids it of all its dross, so the Lord wishes to purify His elect by temptation, that they may be more agreeable to His Divine Majesty (Psalm lxxv. 10). *I will burn them as silver is burned, and prove them as gold is proved*, says the Lord by Zachary (xiii. 9). And by Isaias: *I will clear thee of thy dross in the crucible, and take away all thy tin* (i. 25). This is the work of temptation in the just; it consumes and destroys in them the scum of vices and love of worldly things and of themselves, and makes them more ardent and purified. It is true, says St. Augustine, that not all gather this fruit from temptations, but good people only. Some things, put in the fire, at once soften and melt away, like wax; other things harden, like clay. So good people, in the fire of temptation and trial, are softened, knowing and humbling themselves; but the wicked are hardened and made more obstinate. Thus we see that of the two thieves on the cross, one was converted, while the other blasphemed. So St. Augustine says that temptation is a fire, in which gold comes out brighter, and straw is consumed; the just is made purer and more perfect, and the wicked more utterly lost. It is a storm, in which the just weathers it out and the wicked is drowned (Exod. xiv. 20-28). The children of Israel found their way through the waters, which served them as a wall to the right and the left, while the Egyptians sank and were drowned in the same waters.

St. Cyprian brings this reason to encourage us in tribulations and persecutions and persuade us not to fear them;

because Holy Writ teaches us that God's servants rather increase and multiply thereby, as it tells us of the children of Israel, that the more they were oppressed and harassed by the Egyptians, the more they increased and multiplied (Exod. i. 12). And of Noah's ark it is said that the waters of the deluge rose in flood and lifted the ark above the mountains of Armenia (Gen. vii. 17); so the waters of tribulations and afflictions lift up and greatly perfect a soul. If you are not purified by temptation, it will be because you are not gold, but straw, and so remain black and foul. Gerson says that, as the sea by its storms and tempests casts out of itself the impurities that it has gathered, and remains clear and purified, so the spiritual sea of our soul is cleansed and purified by temptations from the impurities and imperfections that it is apt to gather from an unwholesome peace and tranquillity, and to that purpose God sends them. Again, as a good husbandman prunes his vine that it may bear more fruit, so the saints say God our Lord, Who likens Himself in the Gospel to a husbandman, prunes His vines, that is, His elect, that they may fructify more. *Every branch that beareth fruit in me, he will prune it that it may bear more fruit* (John xv. 2).

What has been said is further confirmed by this, that the effect of temptation is to make the contrary virtue strike deeper root in the soul. The holy Abbot Nilus says: "As frosts and storms make shrubs and trees take deeper root in the soil, so do temptations make the contrary virtues take deeper root in the soul"—*Plantas enutriunt venti et tentatio confirmat animae fortitudinem*. *Virtue is made perfect in temptation [in infirmitate]*, that is, is established, solidly grounded, and made steadfast (II Cor. xii. 9). When a disputant assails a truth and you defend it, the more reasons and arguments he brings to assail it, the more reasons you find to establish and confirm it. So with the servant of God—the more temptations the devil brings up in opposition to virtue, the more motives and reasons God's servant

finds to preserve it and resist the temptation; then, too, he makes new resolutions and practises more acts of the virtue in question, which thus takes root and is strengthened and grows the more. Thus it is very well said that temptation acts on the soul like blows on the anvil, which harden it more and make it more solid and strong.

Besides this, which is the ordinary course of things, St. Bonaventure says that God our Lord is wont to bestow extraordinary consolations and rewards on those who are much tempted to any vice and show themselves faithful in temptation, by bestowing on them in an eminent degree the contrary virtue. Thus St. Gregory relates of St. Benedict how manfully he resisted a strong temptation of the flesh by throwing himself naked among brambles and thorns; wherefore the Lord gave him such perfection of chastity that thenceforth he never more experienced any impure temptations. We read the same of St. Thomas Aquinas, how with a blazing brand he put to flight a woman who came to solicit him; God thereupon sent angels who girded tight his loins as a sign that He bestowed upon him the gift of perpetual chastity. In the same way St. Bonaventure says of those who are tempted against faith, or with temptations to blasphemy, that the Lord is wont to give them afterwards great clearness and strong light of faith and a burning love of God, and the same with other temptations. He quotes to this effect that text of Isaias (xiv. 2): *They shall capture and subdue those who sought to capture and subdue them.* That is a thing that gives great comfort in temptations. Take comfort and animate yourself to fight, my brother, for the Lord wishes the contrary virtue hereby to strike deep roots in your soul; He wishes to bestow on you an angelic chastity. A lion came out to meet Samson, and he met it and slew it, and afterwards he found in it a honeycomb (Judges xiv. 6, 8). So does temptation look like a lion at the outset: but do not be afraid of it; meet it and overcome it; and you will see

how afterwards you find therein very great sweetness and pleasure.

Hence also it will be understood how on the contrary, when one lets himself be carried away by temptation and yields to it, the bad habit will grow by the doing of the acts that belong to it, and therewith the temptation will also grow and be stronger in future because the vice will have taken deeper root and got more mastery over the man. So St. Augustine observes. *Jerusalem hath sinned a great sin, therefore hath she become unstable*, says the Prophet Jeremy (Lam. i. 8), weaker and more apt to fall again; as the Wise Man also says: *The sinner will add sin to sin* (Ecclus. iii. 29). This is a very important warning for those who are assailed with temptations. The devil with such people is wont to deceive and blind them, getting them to believe that the temptation will cease by their gratifying it. A very great delusion! Rather, if you comply with the temptation, it will strike deeper root, and the passion and appetite will grow upon you, and henceforth will have greater force and more mastery over you; it will come back to overthrow you more easily time after time. They say well that this is like the case of dropsy; the more the dropsical man drinks, the thirstier he grows; or of the miser—the more he gets, the greater does his covetousness become. So in this case take it for an understood thing that, when you let temptation carry you away and yield to it, it will grow as many degrees as you yield, and you will lose so many degrees of strength. And when you resist and show fight, not yielding to it, virtue and strength grow in you to a proportionate degree. Thus the means to gain the victory over temptations and evil inclinations, and attain peace and quiet, is never to give in to them or let them have their own way. In this fashion, little by little, with the help of the Lord, the temptation and passion gradually loses strength until it ceases to give any trouble at all. This should greatly encourage us to resist temptations.

CHAPTER VII

That Temptations Make a Man Diligent and Fervent

TEMPTATIONS carry with them also another considerable benefit and advantage, that they make a man diligent and careful, fervent and spiritual, as being always on the verge of a fight. As a long peace makes men slack, careless, and up to doing very little, so war and practice in arms makes them strong, robust, and valiant. For this reason Cato in the Roman senate gave this as his opinion: "It is well for the Romans that Cathage should stand intact, lest idleness draw them into other and greater evils. Woe to Rome when Carthage shall be no more!" The Lacedemonians gave the same answer when their king proposed to destroy and level to the ground a city that had given them much trouble at every stage of their history. The governors and senators declared that they would never consent to the breaking of the whetstone on which the strength and valor of the Lacedemonian youth was sharpened to a keen edge. They gave the name of "whetstone" to a city that had often made them take up arms, for thereby their youth were exercised in arms, and displayed the mettle and valor of each; and they reckoned it a great injury to their state to have no more wars and conquests. Thus having no temptations is apt to make men remiss and careless. A religious is going about with folded arms: nothing can induce him to take the discipline or wear a haircloth; he yawns at meditation, is slack in obedience, wanders about seeking conversation. There comes upon him a violent temptation, in which God and God's aid are necessary; thereupon he pulls himself together, and conceives spirit and fervor for mortification and meditation. Even in the world they say: "If you want to know how to pray, go to sea." Necessity and danger teach people to pray and have recourse to God in earnest. So St. Chrysos-

tom says that on this account God permits temptations for our good and spiritual profit. "When He sees that we are falling into tepidity, withdrawing from His conversation and intimacy and making little account of spiritual things, He lets us go a little from His hand, that, being thus chastised, we may return to His Majesty with more seriousness and care." And elsewhere: "When the devil assails us and goes about to frighten us with his temptations, that makes for our advancement, since then we get to know what we are and have more diligent recourse to God." Thus temptations are not only no obstacle or hindrance to our traveling in the way of virtue, but are even a means to help us thereto. So the Apostle St. Paul called temptation, not a knife or lance, but a prick and goad. The goad does not kill nor injure, but awakens and arouses, and makes one go the way more vigorously; so temptation does not injure, but does much good, since it arouses and awakens people to go their way better. This is apt to prove generally beneficial to all, even to the most advanced. However good and strong a horse may be, the spur is needful, and he runs better when he feels it; so God's servants run better and more nimbly in the service of God when they feel these pricks and goads of temptations, and then they become more humble and cautious.

St. Gregory says: "The aim of the devil in temptation is evil, but that of the Lord is good." The leech, when it sucks the blood of the patient, has no other purpose but to glut itself and would suck it all away if it could; but the purpose of the physician is to draw off the bad blood and give health to the sick man. When they apply the cautery called the "fiery button" to a patient, all that the fire wants is to burn, but all that the surgeon wants is to heal; the fire would like to reach the healthy part, but the surgeon applies it only to that which is diseased and will not let it go further. Thus the aim of the devil in temptation is to ruin our virtue and merit and glory; but the Lord's aim is

otherwise, and He marvelously works the exact contrary effect by the same means. Thus the stones that the devil hurls against us to break our heads and kill us, He takes to work out from them a most fair and precious crown for us, as we read of the glorious St. Stephen, who was surrounded by persecutors and overwhelmed by the stones that they threw at him, and saw the heavens opened, and Jesus Christ as it were gathering up those stones, to make of them for him a jeweled crown of glory.

Gerson adds another point that is very consoling, which he says is the common doctrine of doctors and saints. It is that, though one under the molestation of temptations commits some faults, and thinks that he has been guilty of some negligence and carelessness, and there has been some venial sin mixed up in the matter; nevertheless, on the other hand, the patience that he keeps under this affliction, and his conformity with the will of God, and the resistance that he makes, fighting against the temptation, and the expedients and means that he applies to gain the victory, not only remove and clear away all these faults and negligences, but make in him a growth and progress in merit of greater grace and greater glory, according to the saying of the Apostle: *God draws good from the temptation—faciet cum tentatione proventum* [ἐκβασις, a way out] (I Cor. x. 13), and makes us thrive and gain advantage thereby. A nurse or mother, in order that her child may learn to walk, leaves it a little to itself and then calls it. The child trembles and dares not go; she lets it alone, even though it falls sometimes, holding that for a less evil than its not learning to walk: thus does God deal with us. *I am as a nursing mother to Ephraim* (Osee xi. 3). God reckons nothing of these falls and faults that you think you commit, in comparison with the advantage that follows from temptations. Blossius relates of the holy virgin Gertrude that she afflicted and scolded herself much for a small defect that she had, and desired and begged God to deliver her

from it altogether. And the Lord replied very gently and sweetly: "Why wishest thou Me to be deprived of great honor, and thyself of great reward? For every time that thou dost recognize this defect or any other like it, and purposest to avoid it in future, thou gainest a great reward; and every time that anyone endeavors to overcome his defects for My love, he honoreth Me as much as a soldier would honor his king by fighting manfully in war against his enemies and trying to overcome them."

CHAPTER VIII

That the Saints and Servants of God Not Only Do Not Grow Sorrowful over Their Temptations, but Rather Rejoice for the Profit They Make Thereby

COUNT it all joy, brethren, when ye fall into temptations, says St. James (i. 2). And St. Paul: Yea, we even glory in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience probation, and probation hope (Rom. v. 3-4). In this manner St. Gregory explains the saying of Job: *If I sleep, I will say, when shall I rise? and again I will hope for the evening* (Job vii. 4). By the evening that Job hoped for St. Gregory understands temptation, and he notes that Job desired it as something good and profitable; for it is of good and prosperous events that we say we hope for them, and of ill and hurtful events, that we fear them. But because holy Job regarded temptation as a thing suited to him, and good and profitable, therefore he says that he hoped for it.

St. Dorotheus alleges to this purpose a story, related in the "Spiritual Meadow," of a disciple of one of the ancient Fathers who was much assailed by the spirit of fornication, and by favor of the Lord's grace he resisted manfully his evil and filthy thoughts; and to mortify himself he fasted, spent much time in prayer, and ill treated his body

by the labor of his hands. When his holy master saw him in such distress, he said to him: "If you like, my son, I will ask the Lord to deliver you from this combat." To that the disciple replied: "I see well, father, that it is a great affliction that I suffer; but nevertheless I feel that by reason of this temptation I profit more, because I have more recourse to God by prayer, mortification, and penance: and so what I beg of you is to ask God to give me patience and fortitude to suffer this affliction and to come out victorious, clean, and without reproach." The old man was delighted to hear this answer, and said: "Now I understand, son, that you are advancing in the way of perfection." When one is assailed by some vice and manages to resist manfully, then he walks in humility, solicitude, and anxiety, and by these afflictions and trials, little by little, his soul is cleansed and purified till it arrives at great purity and perfection. Of another holy monk St. Dorotheus relates that, when God delivered him from a temptation that he had, he was sad, and weeping said lovingly to God: "Lord, so I was not worthy to suffer and be afflicted and endure some tribulation for love of Thee." St. John Climacus relates of St. Ephrem that, coming to a very high state of peace and tranquillity—to what they call the earthly heaven and impassibility—he begged of God to put him back and renew the ancient battles of his temptations, that he might not lose the occasion and material for meriting and working out his crown. Of another holy monk Palladius relates that he came one day to the Abbot Pastor and said: "God has delivered me from my conflicts and given me peace, because so I besought Him." Pastor said: "Return to God and ask him that your conflicts may return, that you may not grow negligent." He had recourse to the Lord, saying what Pastor had told him. God answered that he was right, and his temptations came back. We see even that the Apostle St. Paul was not heard when he begged to be delivered from his temptation; he was told (II

Cor. xii. 9) : *Sufficit tibi gratia mea, nam virtus in infirmitate perficitur*—"My grace is sufficient for thee, for virtue is perfected and brought to light in temptation."

CHAPTER IX

That in Temptations One Learns Lessons Not for Oneself Only, but for Others

THERE is another great advantage in temptations, and one very important for those whose business it is to aid their neighbor; it is that under temptation a soul is taught lessons not for herself only but for the benefit of others, experiencing in herself what she has afterwards to see in those whom she has to guide and direct. Under temptation the soul is exercised in the spiritual warfare, and by attentively considering the comings and goings of the Evil One, she thereby learns the lore of a spiritual master to guide souls, for experience teaches much. Hence the proverb: "No better surgeon than the man who himself has been well knived." As intercourse with the world makes men wide-awake, practical, and experienced, so do temptations. *They that sail the sea can tell the perils thereof* (Ecclus. xliii. 26). *But he who hath never been tried, what doth he know?* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9). He will know nothing either for himself or for others. *The man who hath had experience in many things, will be a man of many resources; but he who hath not had experience deviseth little* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 9-10). He who has been well inured to these spiritual wars will make a good pastor. That, then, is another reason why the Lord wishes us to go through temptation, that we may have dexterity as masters of spirit to guide. To carry on this thought further, the Lord wishes us also to be tempted, that, when we see our brother come to us in temptation and affliction, we may have the sense to compassionate him. It holds in the spiritual as in the corporal order that one who

has had many infirmities and attacks of illness will be the man to compassionate and receive with charity and love those who are in the like distress.

Cassian tells of a young monk, very pious, but much vexed with impure temptations. He went to another monk, an old man, and told him plainly all about these temptations and bad motions which he suffered, thinking to find consolation and remedy from his prayers and counsels. But it turned out just the other way. The old man—who was old in years only, and utterly wanting in prudence and discretion—on hearing of the temptations of this youth, got horrified and began to bless himself, and gave him a rough handling, scolded him in harsh words, called him a miserable wretch, and said that he was unworthy of the name of a monk for having such things passing through his mind. In the end he sent him away, so disconsolate with his rebukes that the poor monk, instead of coming out cured, came out more sorely stricken, in great sadness, discouragement, and despair. And now he had no thought nor concern for any remedy to his temptation but to put the matter into execution, so much so that he took the road leading to the town with this determination and intent. The Abbot Apollo, one of the holiest and most experienced of the Fathers who lived in those parts, happened to meet him, and at sight saw from his appearance and mien that he was under some grave temptation; so he began with great gentleness to ask him how he felt and what was the reason of the disturbance and sadness that he showed. The youth was so lost in his own thoughts, so absorbed in his imaginations, that he answered never a word. The old man, seeing that his sadness and perturbation of mind was so great as not to allow him to speak, and make him seek to hide the cause thereof, importuned him very lovingly and gently to tell him of it. At last, overcome by his importunities, the young man told him outright that he could not go on being a monk nor resist the temptations and motions

of the flesh, according as the old man had told him, and that he had determined to leave the monastery, return to the world, and marry. Then the holy Abbot Apollo began to console and encourage him, saying that he too had those temptations every day; and that he must not be alarmed or give up on that account, for these things are not so much overcome and turned down by our own efforts as by the grace and mercy of God. Finally he begged him to stop for at least one day and return to his cell, and there beg of God light and remedy for his need. As the term asked for was so short, he gained his point with him; and, that gained, the Abbot Apollo went off to the hermitage or cell of the old man who had scolded the youth. When he came near, he put himself in prayer, and kneeling on his knees, and lifting up his hands with tears in his eyes, he began his prayer to God: "Lord, Who knowest the strength and weakness of each, and art the tender physician of souls, pass on the temptation of this youth to that old man, that he may learn at least in his old age to have compassion on the weaknesses and troubles of the young." Scarcely had he finished his prayer, when he saw a hideous little negro shooting a fiery arrow at the cell of that old man, wounded with which the old man came forthwith out of his cell, and went like one distracted, coming out of the entrance and going back again; at length, not being able to keep quiet or find rest in his cell, he took the road which the youth was taking to the town. The Abbot Apollo, who was standing looking on, and who by what he had seen understood his temptation, went up to him and asked him: "Where are you going, and what cause or temptation is it that makes you forget the gravity proper to your age, and walk with such haste and precipitation?" The other, confounded and ashamed by his bad conscience, understood that his temptation was known, and found no words to answer. Then the holy abbot took his hand and began to read him a lesson. "Go back," he said, "to your cell, and understand that up till now either the

devil did not know of you, or reckoned nothing of you, seeing that he did not assail you as he is wont to assail those whom he envies. By this you will know the smallness of your stock of virtue, that at the end of so many years that you have been a monk you have not been able to resist a temptation, nor even to endure it and stand out against it so much as one single day, but at the very outset you were overcome and were already going off to put the thing in execution. Know that for this the Lord has permitted this temptation to reach you, that at least in your old age you might know how to have compassion on the infirmities and temptations of others, and learn by experience to send them away consoled and encouraged, not in despair, as you did this young man who came to you. Doubtless the devil assailed him with these temptations, while he left you to yourself, because he had more envy of his virtue and progress than of yours, and thought that so strong a virtue must be countered by strong and violent temptations. Learn, then, from this in your future life to know how to compassionate others, and lend a hand to him who is going to fall, and help and lift him up with soft and loving words, instead of helping him to a fall by rough and disagreeable speeches, according to that word of Isaias: *God hath given me prudence and discretion, that I may know how to encourage and hold him up who has fallen* (Isaias l. 4), and according to the example of Christ our Savior, of Whom the same Isaias says, quoted by the Evangelist St. Matthew: *The bruised reed he shall not finally break, and the smoking flax he shall not finally extinguish* (Isaias xlii. 3).” The holy man concluded by saying: “And since none can appease or check the movements and excitements of the flesh otherwise than by the favor and grace of the Lord, let us offer prayer to God that He may deliver thee from this temptation; for it is He Who wounds and He Who heals, He Who humbles and exalts, He Who does to death and quickens.” The holy man set himself to prayer, and as at his

prayer the temptation came, so also at the same the Lord took it away at once. Thus hereby both the youth and the old man got their cure and their lesson together.

CHAPTER X

Here Begins the Enumeration of Remedies against Temptations, and First on the Part of the Mind, the Strength and Cheerfulness Which We Should Keep in Dealing with Them

FOR the rest, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put ye on the armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the snares of the devil (Eph. vi. 10-11). The blessed St. Anthony, a man well versed and experienced in these spiritual wars and battles, used to say that one of the principal means to overcome our enemy is to show courage, strength, and cheerfulness in temptations, because thereby the enemy is at once put out and discouraged and loses all hope of being able to hurt us. Our Father, in his Book of Spiritual Exercises, sets down an excellent rule and instruction to this effect. He says that the devil our enemy behaves with us in temptations like a woman quarreling with a man; if she sees that the man stands out and shows fight, she at once subsides, turns her back, and flies; but if she has an inkling of pusillanimity and cowardice in the man, she thereupon plucks up and conceives greater boldness and daring, and turns into a tiger. So when the devil tempts us, if we show fight and spirit and withstand his temptations manfully, he thereupon loses heart and gives himself up for beaten; but if he notices in us signs of pusillanimity and discouragement, he then gathers greater spirit and strength, and turns into a lion and tiger against us. So the Apostle St. James says: *Resist the devil and he will fly from you* (James iv. 7). St. Gregory confirms this by that Scripture saying in

the Book of Job (iv. 11), where according to the Septuagint the devil is called *mirmicoleon*, that is, lion and ant. He is the lion of ants, but if you show him the strength of a lion, he will be an ant to you. For this reason the saints advise us not to be sad under temptation, but carry on the fight cheerfully, as Holy Scripture tells us of Judas Maccabaeus and his brethren and companions: *They fought the battles of Israel with great joy* (I Macc. iii. 2); and so they won.

And there is another reason for this; it is that, as the devils are so envious of our good, our cheerfulness is a torment and pain to them, and our sadness and pusillanimity gladdens them. Thus, if it were only for that reason, we should endeavor to make no show of pusillanimity and sadness, and not give them that satisfaction, but show great courage and cheerfulness to make them rage the more. The ecclesiastical histories tell of the holy martyrs, that one of the things that made their executioners rage, and whereby they tormented their executioners more than their executioners tormented them, was the courage and fortitude which they showed in their torments. In this way, then, we should behave towards the devils in our temptations, to make them rage and be angry. On account of this being such a main means to overcome temptations and gain the victory and triumph over our enemies, we will go on in the following chapters to mention some things that will aid us to maintain this courage and fortitude in them.

CHAPTER XI

How Little It Is That the Devil Can Do against Us

IT will help us not a little towards keeping up our courage and fortitude in temptations, to consider the weakness of our enemies and how little the devil can do against us, since he cannot make us fall into any sin if we do not want to. St. Bernard says very well: "Look and observe,

my brethren, how weak our enemy is, since he can only overcome him who wishes to be overcome—*non vincit nisi volentem.*” If a soldier going to war and to fight against the enemy knew for certain that if he only willed it he would be victorious and that victory was in his hand, what satisfaction would he conceive, being certain of victory, as he is certain that he wishes to win and not be beaten. In this way, then, it is open to us to wage our warfare with the devil, we being certain that he cannot overcome us if we ourselves do not wish to be overcome. St. Jerome remarks this very well on those words that the devil spoke to Christ our Redeemer, when he set Him on the pinnacle of the Temple and tempted Him, urging Him to throw Himself down from thence. St. Jerome says: “This is the voice of the devil, who desires that all should throw themselves down and fall into the abyss. The devil can urge you to throw yourself down, but he cannot throw you down if you do not wish it”—*Persuadere potest, praecipitare non potest.* “Throw yourself down,” says the fiend when he tempts you; “throw yourself into hell.” Say to him: “You throw yourself down—you know the way; I have no mind for the plunge.” If, then, you have no mind for it, he cannot throw you down; if you have no mind to go to hell, he cannot take you there. There was once a man walking in much affliction, quite prostrate and worn out with a temptation of the devil inwardly saying to him, “Hang yourself.” He opened his grief to a religious, who said to him: “Brother, must not that be by your will? Say then to him, ‘I will not,’ and come and tell me next week how things go.” Thereby he got rid of the temptation, and came back to thank the confessor who had given him that remedy. This, then, is the means that we are now prescribing.

This agrees well with what St. Augustine says: “My brethren, before the coming of Christ the devil went about loose; but when He came into the world, He tied up the devil, who had played the strong man therein (Matt. xii.

29)." So St. John said in the Apocalypse: *I saw an angel coming down from heaven, who held the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand; and he seized the dragon, the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up there, and sealed up the door upon him, that he might no more deceive the nations, until the thousand years should be accomplished; and after that he must be untied for a little while* (Apoc. xx. 1-3). St. Augustine says on this passage that tying up the devil means not letting him do all the evil that he could and would, if let, in the way of tempting and deceiving men in a thousand subtle ways. When Antichrist comes, they will give him somewhat more liberty, but at present he is tied up fast. But you will say: "If he is tied up, how does he succeed in doing so much mischief?" "It is true," says St. Augustine, "that he succeeds in doing much mischief, but that is among the careless and negligent; for the devil is tied up like a dog in chains, and cannot bite anyone except him who chooses to go up to him. He can bark and provoke and solicit to evil; but he cannot bite or do evil except to one who chooses to approach him"—*Latrare potest; sollicitare potest; mordere omnino non potest nisi volentem*. Now as he would be a fool, and you would laugh at and make game of the man, who let himself be bitten by a dog strongly made fast on a chain, so, says St. Augustine, they deserve to be laughed at and derided who let themselves be bitten and overcome by the devil, since he is tied and chained up tight like a mad dog, and can do no mischief except to those who choose to come near him. If you are bitten, you have brought it on yourself, since you have gone up to him for him to bite you. Seeing that he cannot get at you, nor make you fall into any fault unless you choose, so you may well make game of him. St. Augustine explains to this effect that verse of the psalm: *That dragon that thou hast created, Lord, for us to make game of him*

(Psalm ciii. 26). Have you not seen how they make game of a dog or of a bear that is tied up, and how boys make of him a sport and pastime? So, then, you may make game of the devil when he brings up against you his temptations, and call him dog, and say to him: "Get away, you wretch; you are tied up; you cannot bite, nor do any more than bark."

When the devils appeared to the blessed St. Anthony in various horrible shapes of wild beasts—lions, tigers, bulls, serpents, and scorpions, surrounding him and threatening him with their claws and teeth, roaring and hissing dreadfully as though they would swallow him up—the saint made game of them and said to them: "If you had any power, any one of you would be a match for one man; but because you are weak, you arrange to come in a great rabble to frighten me with that. If the Lord has given you any power over me, here I am, eat me up; but if you have none, why labor in vain?" So we should do; for since God has become man, the devil has no power, as he himself confessed to St. Anthony, who answered him: "Thanks be to God for that, for though you are the father of lies, in this you speak the truth." For Christ Himself tells us: *Have courage and confidence, for I have come and delivered the world from the dominion and power of the devil—confidite, ego vici mundum* (John xvi. 33). *Infinite thanks be given to God, who has given us this victory through Christ* (I Cor. xv. 57).

CHAPTER XII

*That We Should Draw Great Courage and Confidence for
Struggling with Temptations from the Consideration
That God Is Looking at Us*

IT will help us also much towards keeping up great courage and strength in temptations and struggling manfully against them, to consider that God is looking at us. When a good soldier is in the field fighting against the enemy, and comes to see that the emperor or commander in chief is looking on and enjoying the sight of the courage with which he fights, he gathers great strength and spirit for the struggle. Now this is the case in our spiritual combats, in sober earnestness and truth. When we are fighting against temptations, we must make account that we are in a theater, surrounded and encompassed by angels and all the heavenly court, they looking on, awaiting the success; and that the president and judge of our struggling and fighting is Almighty God. This is the reflection made by the saints, founded on those words of the holy Gospel: *Lo, the angels came and ministered to him* (Matt. iv. 11). In that temptation and spiritual combat of Christ with the devil, the angels were looking on; and when the victory was complete, they began to minister to Him and sing the praise of the victory.

We read of the blessed St. Anthony that on one occasion he was grievously beaten and kicked by the devils, when, lifting up his eyes, he saw the roof of his cell open, and a ray of light stream in, so wonderful that at its presence all the devils fled and the pain of his wounds left him; and with heartfelt sighs he said to the Savior, Who then appeared to him: "Where wert Thou, good Jesus, where wert Thou, when I was so mauled by the enemy? Why wert not Thou here at the beginning of the attack, to stop it or to heal all my wounds?" To whom the Lord answered and

said: "Anthony, I was there from the beginning, but I was looking to see how thou behavedst in the fight; and because thou didst combat manfully, I will always aid thee and make thy name great all over the round of the earth." Thus we are a spectacle to God and the angels and to the whole heavenly court. Who, then, will not pluck up heart to fight vigorously and valiantly before such a theater?

And besides, since God's eyes being upon us means God's help given us, we should go on further to consider that not only is God looking upon us as Judge, to give us reward and recompense if we are victorious, but also as Father and Patron, to favor and aid us that we may come out victors. *The eyes of the Lord range all over the earth, and give strength to all who hope in him* (II Chron. xvi. 9). *He is ever at my right hand that I may not slip* (Psalm xv. 8). In the Fourth Book of Kings Holy Scripture recounts how the king of Syria sent the whole strength of his army with chariots and horsemen to march upon the city of Dothain, where the Prophet Eliseus lived, to take him; and his servant Gieri, rising in the morning and seeing such a multitude upon him, was terrified and cried aloud to Eliseus, telling him of what was going on. *Oh, dear, my lord, what shall we do?* (vi. 15). He thought his master and he were lost men. The prophet said to him: *Fear not, for there are more with us than with them.* And he begged God to open the man's eyes to see. He opened his eyes, and he saw the whole mountain covered with horsemen and chariots of fire in their defense, at which he was much comforted. With this we also should be comforted. *Put me, O Lord, by thy side, and let any man's hand who willeth fight against me* (Job xvii. 3), said holy Job. And the Prophet Jeremy: *The Lord is with me, and like a strong man of war fighteth for me: I have nothing to fear from my enemies, because without doubt they shall fall and be confounded* (xx. 11). St. Jerome, on that saying of the prophet: *Lord, thou hast crowned us as with the buckler of thy good will* (Psalm v.

13): says: "Observe that there in the world a buckler is one thing, and a crown is another; but with God they are as one thing because the Lord, in defending us with the buckler of His good will, sends us His protection and aid; this His buckler and protection is our crown and victory." *If God be with us, who shall be against us?* (Rom. viii. 31).

CHAPTER XIII

Of Two Excellent Reasons for Fighting with Great Courage and Confidence under Temptation

THE blessed St. Basil says that the rage and enmity which the devil bears against us is not only envy of man, but hatred which he bears against God our Lord. And since he cannot face God in might, nor gratify his raging ill will upon Him, but sees that man has been created in the image and likeness of God, he turns all his rage and ill will upon man, for being the image and likeness of the God Whom he so much abhors; and seeks to avenge himself upon him, doing him all the harm he can—as though one were angry with the king, and vented all his rage on his images, because he could not get at the king himself; or as the bull, says St. Basil, seeing himself wounded by a man with a spear, makes for the man's statue and figure, which they have put in the bull ring, and discharges on it his fury and rage, tearing it to pieces, wreaking his vengeance on that instead of the man.

Hence the saints draw excellent reasons to encourage us to struggle manfully under temptation and have great confidence that we shall come victoriously out of it. The first is, because the question therein is not of our honor alone, but of that of God, Whom the devil tries to injure and offend in us. This should animate us to sacrifice our lives rather than fail, that the devil may not carry his point of having wreaked some vengeance on God in our persons, as

being His images, which He so much loves and sets such store by. Thus we are not only defending our own side, but standing to arms for the side and cause of God, and so we ought to die, if called upon, rather than consent to any infringement of the cause of God.

The second reason is this. Since it is in regard of God, and out of the hatred which he bears to His Divine Majesty, that the devil makes war upon us, we may confidently expect that the Lord will come forward in defense of His own cause, make the affair His own, and stand to arms on our behalf, that we be not beaten nor brought under the power of the devil, but come out victorious and triumphant. We see here on earth that, if a prince or powerful lord sees anyone put to any hard task or situation of difficulty in his cause and on his account, he comes forward at once as the need requires and takes the affair for his own. Holy Scripture tells us in the Book of Esther that because of Mardochee, Aman was on the point of putting to death the whole people of the Jews, and Mardochee turned the tables on his own cause in such sort that he put Mardochee and all his where he would fain have put them. Much more will the Lord do this. Thus we may boldly say to God: *Arise, O Lord, and defend thy own cause: take up arms and buckler, and rise to my aid* (Psalm lxxiii. 22; xxxiv. 2).

CHAPTER XIV

That God Permits No One to Be Tempted beyond His Strength, and That We Must Not Be Discouraged at the Temptation Growing or Continuing

BUT God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted beyond what ye can bear, but will make even with temptation issue, that ye may may be able to endure it (I Cor. x. 13), says the Apostle St. Paul. And if the

temptation increases, there will also increase succor and support to overcome and triumph over your enemies and get the better of the temptation. This is a very consoling truth, and one to give us great courage under temptation. We know on the one hand that the devil can do no more than God gives him leave to do, nor tempt us one point beyond that; on the other hand we are certain that God will not give him leave to tempt us beyond what we can stand, as the Apostle here says. Who will not gather comfort and courage from this? There is no doctor who measures and weighs out the ounces of aloes to be given to a patient with so much care as the Heavenly Physician measures and weighs out the aloes of temptation and tribulation that He is to give or permit to His servants according to the virtue and strength of each. The holy Abbot Ephrem says very well: "If the potter, who makes vessels of clay and puts them in the oven, knows well the proper time to keep them on the fire that they may come out well hardened and fit, and serviceable for man's use—he does not keep them longer than is necessary, that they may not get overheated and break; nor again less time than is necessary, that they may not come out so soft as to go to pieces at once when taken in hand—much more will God act in this way towards us, seeing that He is infinite wisdom and goodness, and great is the fatherly love that He bears us."

St. Ambrose on that text of St. Matthew: *Jesus went into a boat, and His disciples followed him; and presently there arose on the sea such a violent storm that the waves washed over the boat, but he was asleep* (Matt. viii. 23-24), says: Observe that even the Lord's elect, and associates living in His company, are assailed with temptations; and He sometimes plays the part of one asleep, hiding like a good father the love that He bears His children, that they may have more earnest recourse to Him; but God does not sleep, nor has He forgotten you. The Prophet Habacuc says: *If ye think that the Lord is slow a-coming, hope in him, and be*

sure that he will come and not be late (ii. 3). He seems to you to linger, but in fact and reality He does not linger. The sick man thinks that the night is long, and the day is slow in coming. But it is not so; the day is not behindhand, but will come in due time. Thus God is not behind His time, though to a sick man like you it looks as though He were. He knows well the occasion and situation, and will be at hand in time of need.

St. Augustine applies to this subject the answer of Christ our Redeemer to the sisters of Lazarus, Martha and Mary: *This sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby* (John xi. 4). Thus, he says, God often deals with His servants; He leaves them for some time in temptations and tribulations, so that He seems to have forgotten them; but He has not forgotten, but does this to draw them out afterwards more triumphant and glorious. So He did to Joseph, whom He left a long time in prison, afterwards to draw him out thence, as He did draw him out, in great honor and glory, making him governor of all Egypt. So you must understand the Lord holds back, and permits the temptation and tribulation to last, to draw you out from it to your greater profit and improvement afterwards. St. Chrysostom also observes this on the words: *Thou liftest me up from the gates of death* (Psalm ix. 15). The prophet, he remarks, did not say, "Thou delivered me, O Lord, from the gates of death," but "Thou liftest me up," because the Lord not only delivers His servants from temptations, but goes further, making their virtue more excellent and signal. And therefore, however hard pressed you see yourself, though you seem to be driven close up to the gates of hell, you must have confidence that God will draw you out safe from thence. *'Tis he that doth to death and giveth life; letteth come nigh to the gates of death, and draweth out and delivereth therefrom* (I Kings ii. 6), when you thought that this time you were a lost man. And so says holy Job: *Though*

he kill me, still will I hope in him (xiii. 15). St. Jerome makes a good reflection on what befell the Prophet Jonah when he thought that he was a lost man and there was no means of saving him, but they were throwing him to drown in the sea. The Lord had there a whale ready to receive him, not to devour but to save him and carry him to land as in a well-appointed vessel. Observe and consider, says St. Jerome, how what men thought was his death was his preservation and life. So, then, he says, it happens to us, that many times what we take to be our ruin is our gain, and what we take for death is life.

As with the glass flask in the hands of a juggler, who repeatedly throws it into the air so that bystanders think each time that it must fall and break to pieces; but after he has done that three or four times, fear departs from the lookers-on, and they take the juggler to be so clever that they admire his dexterity; so the servants of God, who know well what a clever performer God is—and have practical experience that He knows well how to play with us, lifting us up and bringing us down, doing us to death and quickening us to life, striking and healing us—have now no fear in adversities and dangers though they take themselves to be frail as glass, because they know they are in good hands and that the flask will not break nor be allowed to fall. *My lot, O Lord, is in thy hands* (Psalm xxx. 16).

In the Ecclesiastical History there is related a saying of the Abbot Isidore: "For forty years I have been assailed by a vice, and have never consented to it." And of many other of those holy old monks we read like instances of temptations continual and vehement, that they fought with great courage and confidence. *There were giants, versed in war* (Baruch. iii. 26). And those giants, who knew well how to fight, we have to imitate. The glorious St. Cyprian, to encourage us thereto, quotes the saying of Isaias (xliii. 1-2): *Fear not, says God, because I have redeemed thee: thou art mine, and I know thee well by name: when thou passest*

through the waters, I will be with thee, and thou shalt not drown; when thou walkest in the midst of the fire, thou shalt not burn, and the flame shall do thee no hurt, because I am thy God, thy Lord and Savior. To the same effect are those very tender and comforting words which God speaks by the same prophet: *Ye shall be carried at my breasts, and on my knees ye shall sit and be fondled: as a mother fondles her little child, so I will comfort you* (Isaias lxvi. 12-13). See with what love and tenderness a mother takes up her child when in any fright it has recourse to her; how she embraces it and gives it suck; how she puts its face close to hers; how she caresses and fondles it. Now with incomparably greater love and tenderness does the Lord receive those who have recourse to Him in their temptations and dangers. This is what the prophet said consoled and encouraged him much in his temptations and labors. *Remember, O Lord, the word that thou hast given to thy servant, whereby thou hast given me hope. This hath strengthened and consoled me in the affliction of my labors, and thy word hath put life into me* (Psalm cxviii. 49-50). This should comfort and encourage us also under temptation, for God cannot fail to keep His word. *It is impossible for God to lie*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. vi. 18).

CHAPTER XV

That to Distrust Ourselves, and Place Our Whole Confidence in God Is a Great Means to Overcome Temptations, and Why God So Readily Comes to the Help of Those Who Trust in Him

WE see that the Lord Himself in many places of Holy Scripture assigns no other reason for protecting and delivering a man in time of temptation and tribulation beyond the fact of his having hoped and trusted in Him. *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him* (Psalm

xc. 15). *Thou who savest them that hope in thee* (Psalm xxvi. 7). *He is the protector of all that hope in him* (Psalm xvii. 31). Hence the Church's collect: "O God, the protector of all that hope in Thee." And the psalmist puts this before God to oblige Him to show mercy: *Have mercy upon me, O God, have mercy upon me, because in thee my soul trusteth, and in the shadows of thy wings I will hope* (Psalm lvi. 2). And the Prophet Daniel does the same: *Because there is no disappointment for them that trust in thee* (Dan. iii. 40). And the Wise Man says: *Who hath ever hoped in the Lord and been disappointed?* (Ecclus. ii. 11). And all Scripture is full of this topic. We have spoken of it above at some length, and therefore need not dwell on it here.

But let us see why this means is so effectual for gaining the favor of the Lord, and why God so readily comes to the help of such as distrust themselves and put their whole confidence in Him. The reason of this we have already mentioned several times, and the Lord Himself assigns it in the psalm: *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him because he hath known my name* (Psalm xc. 14). St. Bernard declares it: "Because the man attributes nothing to himself, but all to God, and gives Him the honor and glory of it all." Thereupon God steps in, and makes the business His own and charges Himself with it, and stands up for His own glory and honor. But when a man trusts in himself and in his own methods and contrivances—taking upon himself the whole conduct of the affair, and so taking it away from God—and seeks to exalt himself with the honor and glory that is due to the Divine Majesty, then God leaves him in his weakness, which is good for nothing. For, as the prophet says: *God hath no pleasure in them that trust in the strength of their horses* (Psalm cxlvi. 10) and in their own methods and contrivances, but in them who distrust themselves and all the means they use of their own, and put their whole confidence in God; to

them He sends succor and bestows upon them His copious and abundant blessing.

St. Augustine says that this is the reason why God sometimes delays His gifts and favors and allows to remain in us for a long time the after-tastes of our vices and bad inclinations, "not for our damnation, but for our humiliation, enhancing in our eyes the value of His grace, lest, if we found everything easy, we should take that to be ours which is really His, an error clean contrary to religion and piety." If we got these things easily, we should not value them so much, and we should straightway think that we had them in our sleeve, the fruit of our own diligence. St. Gregory, on those words of Job: *Lo, there is no help for me in myself* (Job vi. 13), says: "Often we make such a bad use of virtue and the gifts of God that it would be better for us not to have them. Thus the possession of virtue becomes death to the soul; it prompts her to self-confidence; it stabs her with the sword of vain elation; it lifts her up to slay her, and drags her to destruction." That is why the Lord often refuses us His gifts, and permits us to have experience of our own impotence and to fail in many good works, great and small, being unable to do what we want. And He lets this impotence continue for a long time, that we may learn to humble ourselves and to cease to trust ourselves, and not attribute anything to ourselves, but attribute all good to God; and then we shall be able to sing and say: *The bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girt with strength* (I Kings ii. 4).

CHAPTER XVI

*Of Prayer as a Remedy: Some Ejaculatory Prayers
Suitable for Time of Temptation*

PRAYER must always be much recommended as a means, for it is a most general remedy, and one of the chief remedies which Holy Writ and the saints give us; and Christ Himself teaches it in the holy Gospel: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). And He taught us not only by word, but also by His own example that night of His Passion, preparing Himself for the conflict with a long and earnest prayer, not that He needed it Himself, but to teach us what to do in all our temptations and adversities. The Abbot John used to say that a religious should be like a man carrying in his left hand fire, and in his right hand water, that whenever the fire threatened to seize him, he might forthwith pour water on it and put it out. So, when the fire of an unclean and evil thought threatens to seize us, we should at once have at hand the cooling waters of prayer to put it out. He brings also another comparison, and says that a religious is like a man sitting under a large tree, who, seeing many serpents and wild beasts coming against him, unable to resist them, climbs up the tree and so saves himself. In like manner the religious, when he sees temptations coming, must mount up on high by prayer and have recourse to God, and so he will find salvation and deliverance from the temptations and snares of the devil. *In vain is the net cast in sight of winged creatures* (Prov. i. 17). The devil will labor in vain, casting his nets, if we know how to soar on high with the wings of prayer. *Mine eyes are ever on the Lord, because he will pluck my feet from the snare* (Psalm xxiv. 15).

We dilated on this in the First Volume; now we will gather some ejaculatory prayers, whereby we may avail ourselves at such times. Holy Scripture is full of them, especially the Psalms. Such are: *Lord, I suffer violence, answer for me* (Isaias xxxviii. 14). *Arise, why sleepest thou, O Lord, arise and do not abandon me forever. Why hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our need and tribulation?* (Psalm xliii. 23). *Take up thine arms and thy buckler, and arise in our defense: say to my soul, I am thy salvation* (Psalm xxxiv. 2). *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, how long wilt thou turn away thy face from me? How long shall mine enemy glory over me? Look upon me, Lord, and hear me, and enlighten mine eyes, that I may never sleep in death, nor ever mine enemy say, I have prevailed over him* (Psalm xii. 1-5). *Thou, Lord, art my refuge and defense in time of need and tribulation* (Psalm ix. 10). *My hope, O Lord, and my joy shall be to see myself under the shadow and shelter of thy wings* (Psalm lvi. 2; lxii. 8). St. Augustine took great delight in this reflection, and would say to God: "Lord, I am a fledgling, tender and weak; if Thou defendest me not, the kites will carry me off." *Keep me, O Lord, under the shadow of thy wings* (Psalm xvi. 8). There is special marvelous efficacy for this purpose in the beginning of the Sixty-Seventh Psalm, because, as we set up against them in our defense not our own strength, but the strength of God, distrusting ourselves and invoking the favor of His Divine Majesty, our enemies lose heart and fly, seeing that God is coming forward against them in our cause. St. Athanasius affirms that many servants of God have experienced much benefit in their temptations from the recital of this verse. Sometimes with these and the like words of Holy Scripture, which are especially efficacious, sometimes by words gushing out from our necessity and need—which also are very efficacious—we should always keep ready at hand this remedy of having recourse to God in prayer. So Father Master Avila was wont to say: "Temptation to you,

and you to God." *I will lift up mine eyes to the high mountains, whence all help and support is to come to me. My help is of the Lord, who made heaven and earth* (Psalm cxx. 1-2). And we should take care that these cries and sighs come forth, not merely from the lips, but from the innermost depths of the heart, according to that word of the prophet: *Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord* (Psalm cxxix. 1). St. Chrysostom says on those words: "He did not speak nor cry merely with the lips, for the tongue can often speak when the heart is distracted—but from the deepest and innermost depths of his heart, with great fervor, he cried to God."

CHAPTER XVII

Of Two Other Remedies against Temptations

ST. BERNARD says that, when the devil wishes to capture a man, he first carefully studies his character, temperament, and inclination, and assails him by that to which he sees him most inclined. Those who are of a soft and sweet temperament he assails with temptations to impurity and vainglory; those of a rougher blend, with temptations of anger, pride, indignation, and impatience. St. Gregory says the same, and applies a good comparison. He says that, as one of the chief concerns of a bird-catcher is to know what sort of food the birds are fondest of whom he wishes to catch, to provide them with that; so the chief care of our adversaries the devils is to know what sort of things we best like, to provide us therewith and gain a hold on us thereby. Thus we see that the devil assailed and tempted Adam through his wife, because he knew the great affection that he bore her; and Samson also he assailed and overcame by the same, so that he came to discover the riddle and say wherein his strength lay. Thus the devil, like a skillful warrior, goes round and searches out with much

diligence the weakest part of our soul, and the passion that has the greatest sway in each individual and to which he is most inclined, to attack him by that. And this should be the precaution and remedy which we should take on our side against these tactics of the devil—to recognize the weakest side of our soul, the side most destitute of virtue, the side where natural inclination or passion or evil habit is most apt to carry us away, and put there greater care and defenses.

Another remedy, much in conformity with the above, is given us by the saints and masters of spiritual life. They say that we should make it a general rule, when we are assailed by any temptation, immediately to take to the contrary thereof, and defend ourselves by that. In this manner physicians cure the sickness of the body, contraries by contraries. When the sickness comes of cold, they apply hot applications; when of dryness, wet applications; and in this way the humors are reduced to a just mean and put in due proportion. In the same way we should cure and remedy the sicknesses and temptations of the soul. And this is what our Father says: "We should forestall temptations by their contraries; thus, when one is found to be prone to pride, he must be exercised in lowly duties which seem likely to help to humble him; and so of other evil propensities."

CHAPTER XVIII

Of Two Other Chief Remedies, Which Are to Resist Temptation in Its Beginnings, and Never to Be Idle

OF resisting first beginnings St. Jerome says: "Slay your enemy while he is small, strangle him at the commencement, root him out before he grows, because afterwards you will not be able." Temptation is like a spark, which, if it once catches on, causes a conflagration. *Of one spark*

cometh a great fire (Ecclus. xi. 34). The poet says: "Resist beginnings; too late is the medicine made up when the mischief has gathered strength by long delay." And a much better authority advises the same, the Holy Ghost by the Prophet David: *Blessed is he who shall take and dash thy little ones against the rock* (Psalm cxxxvi. 9). And by his son Solomon: *Catch for us the little foxes that lay waste the vineyards* (Cant. ii. 15). When the little foxes of temptations are small, when thoughts are just beginning to arise of rash judgment, of pride, of misplaced affection, of particular friendship, then is the time to dash them against the solid rock, which is Christ and the consideration of His example, that they may not grow and so come to lay waste the vineyard of your soul. We cannot help temptations' and evil thoughts' coming upon us; but happy is he who knows how to get rid of them at the beginning, at their first appearance. So St. Jerome explains this passage. It is very important to resist the beginnings, when the enemy is weak and has but little strength; then resistance is easy, afterwards very difficult.

St. Chrysostom illustrates this by a comparison. When a sick man has a desire to eat something that will do him harm and he vanquishes the desire, he escapes the harm that that unwholesome dish would have done him and is healed of his sickness the sooner; but if for a small gratification of taste he partakes of that injurious dish, he aggravates his sickness, and may come to die of it or to suffer great pain in his cure, all which misfortune he might have escaped by taking a little pains to check at the beginning that gluttonous desire of eating that harmful food. So, when there comes upon a man a thought or desire of looking at some dangerous object, if he conquers himself at the beginning, restraining his eyes and rejecting at once the evil thought, he delivers himself from the molestation and pain of the temptation which otherwise would have arisen therefrom and from the harm which he might have incurred

by consenting to it. But if he does not conquer and restrain himself at the beginning, then for that little negligence or that little pleasure which he got by looking or thinking, he may come afterwards to die the death of his soul, or at least to have great difficulty and trouble in resisting. Thus what would have cost him little or nothing at the beginning, comes in the end to cost him dear. Hence the importance of resisting beginnings.

In the Lives of the Fathers it is related how the devil once appeared to St. Pacomius in the form of a very beautiful woman. The saint asked him why he practised such malicious craft to ensnare men. The devil said: "If you start giving some entry to our first little stirrings, at once we apply stronger incentives to provoke you to sin; but if we see that you resist at the outset and give no entry to the imaginations and thoughts which we bring up, we disappear like smoke."

It is also a great remedy against temptations never to be idle. Cassian says that the Fathers of Egypt took this for a first principle, and kept it as an ancient tradition received from their elders, and recommended it to their disciples for a singular good remedy. "Let the devil always find you busy." So God taught St. Anthony, and gave him this remedy to enable him to persevere in solitude and defend himself against temptations. St. Augustine quotes his case. He says that St. Anthony could not always be at prayer, though he was St. Anthony, and was assailed and harassed at times by various thoughts. He made his petition to God: "Lord, what shall I do? I would fain be good, and my thoughts will not let me." And he heard a voice that said to him: "Anthony, if thou desirest to please God, pray; and when thou canst not pray, labor with thy hands. Take care to be always busy with something; do what is in thy power, and the protection of the Lord shall not fail thee." Others say that there appeared to him an angel in the form of a youth, who dug a little and then went for a

little on his knees in prayer, his hands joined and lifted up, which was teaching the same lesson. Idleness is the root and origin of many temptations and many evils; and it is very important for us that the devil may never find us idle, but always busy.

CHAPTER XIX

Of Temptations Which Come under the Appearance of Good, and that the Great Remedy for All Such Temptations Is to Recognize and Hold Them for What They Are

ST. BONAVENTURE calls our attention to a matter of common knowledge, but quite necessary to insist upon. We are to observe that with good people, who aim at virtue and perfection, the devil makes his attacks on them under the appearance of good, transforming himself into an angel of light. Venom and poison, says St. Jerome, is not given except under the guise of sugar or some other tasty thing, that it may not be noticed; and the hunter hides the snare with the bait. So does the devil. *In the way in which I walked they set up a hidden snare* (Psalm cxli. 4). If the devil's attack were conducted openly and without disguise, they who love virtue and desire to serve God would fly from him, and he could do nothing with them. So, says St. Bernard, "the good man is never deceived except under the appearance of good"—*bonus nunquam nisi simulatione boni decipitur*. The devil is clever enough to know right well the way of entry into each soul: so, to compass his intention, he enters well disguised. At first, says St. Bonaventure, he proposes things good in themselves; then he mixes them up with what is evil; then he offers false goods, which are really evil; and when by this time he has the man in his snare, so that he can hardly get out of it, he then shows clearly his poison and makes

him fall into open sins. Like the scorpion, he has a winning head, and keeps his deadly poison in his tail.

How many, says St. Bonaventure, have struck up a conversation and friendship with sundry others under pretext of spirituality, thinking that what they said was of God and spiritual, and to the profit of their souls? And perhaps in the beginning it was so; but this is the artifice of the devil which we are now laying bare. We know well his artful tricks, his comings in and his goings out; *we are not ignorant of his plans* (II Cor. ii. 11). This is how he begins, first by good things, then follow long talks and conversations—and sometimes they are of God, at others of the great love that they mutually bear one another; then follows the interchange of knick-knacks and small presents for keepsakes and signs of love, which things, says St. Jerome, are a clear sign of a love that is not holy. The devil now goes on to mix evil with good, and thence follow false goods and real evils. In this way the devil deceives many in this and in many other vices, covering them with a veil of virtue, that their real nature may not be known—like him who pretends to be a friend to another to gain access to him, and thereby afterwards treacherously to murder him, as Joab did to Amasa (II Kings xx. 9), and Judas to Christ our Redeemer, delivering Him up and selling Him with a kiss of peace (Luke xxii. 48).

Thus we must greatly beware of these temptations that come under the appearance of good, and be very much on our guard, for they are all the more dangerous inasmuch as they are less easily recognized. Therefore the prophet begged the Lord to deliver him from *the noonday devil* (Psalm xc. 6). The devil is not content with transforming himself into an angel of light, as St. Paul says (II Cor. xi. 14), but transforms himself into an angel of noonday light, making gloom and darkness look resplendently bright, and getting us to think that there is no room for doubt nor any danger, but that that is clearly good which is certainly evil

and of its own nature highly dangerous. There are sundry thieves who go about dressed in silks, so that none could know them nor have an idea that such criminal purpose could have place in those who appear such honorable men, until they are caught with the stolen goods in their hands. Then people are shocked to find out that these were thieves, and say, "Who would have thought it?" Such is the temptation that comes under the appearance of good.

It is the common doctrine of the saints and masters of the spiritual life that the great remedy against all these temptations is to recognize that it is a temptation that is assailing me, as it is enough to recognize one for an enemy to be on one's guard against him. And that is why we said above that self-knowledge is a most efficacious means for overcoming all temptations. The force of this means may be seen by this. If, when the temptation and the evil motion and desire came on, you saw before you a horrible and frightful devil persuading you thereto, what would you do? At once you would make the sign of the cross and call upon the name of Jesus; you would not need to see any more than that it is the devil who is persuading you to do this, to understand that it is a delusion and temptation, and to fly from it. Now this is literally what takes place in our temptations. We have all of us our Angel Guardian, according to those words of Christ: *See that ye despise not one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels ever see the face of my Father who is in heaven* (Matt. xviii. 10). On which words St. Jerome says: "Great is the dignity of souls, and great the value that God sets on them, since at the birth of a man He at once deposes and appoints an angel to guard and take care of him." As a princely father gives to a well-beloved son a tutor to watch over him in body and teach him manners, so God cherishes and values us so much that He gives to each of us an angel for tutor. But to come back to the point, we also each of us carry about against us a devil, who keeps an eye upon us

and busies himself in soliciting us to evil and causing in us bad thoughts and worse motions, and is always looking for an occasion and opportunity for doing that, since he never sleeps, and watches our inclination and what is most to our taste, to assail and gain access to us thereby, using our flesh and sensuality as a means to do us harm. So God said to the devil: *Hast thou not considered my servant Job?* (Job ii. 3), speaking as to one who had been a long time a spy upon Job, and always by his side. Thus the devil is ever at our side. And so, when there comes upon you a movement or thought, inciting you to commit some sin or some imperfection, understand that this is a temptation of the devil, and make the sign of the cross, and be on your guard as if you saw that same devil standing by and telling you to do this.

St. Gregory gives an example that well illustrates this point, of what happened to the blessed St. Benedict in regard of a monk of his. He says that this monk was much tempted in his vocation; he thought he could never stand the rigor of religion and wanted to return to the world. He often went with this temptation to St. Benedict, and the saint told him it was a temptation of the devil, and gave him suitable advice. After doing this many times without success, since the novice never ceased making instance to go, the saint, wearied with his importunity, said to him, "All right," and told them to give him his clothes. Still after all, being a father, he could not help feeling it, and put himself in prayer for him. As the monk was going out of the gates of the monastery to return to the world, he saw coming at him a great dragon with open mouth to devour him. Trembling and shaking all over, he set up loud cries: "Help me, help me, brothers, there's a dragon coming to devour me." The brothers rushed to his aid at his cries, and saw no dragon, but saw the monk trembling as though in the agony of death. They took him to the monastery, and when he saw himself inside, he

made a vow never more to go out of it. He fulfilled his vow and thenceforth was no more troubled with that temptation. St. Gregory observes here that by the prayers of blessed St. Benedict he came to see the dragon that was seeking to devour him, which before that he did not see, and so was following it because he did not take it for a dragon or for a devil; but when he saw it and recognized it, he began to cry out and ask for help to deliver him from it. Thus it is no imagination nor conceit of our own brain, but a fact of sober reality, that it is the devil who assails us in temptation. And so also the Apostle St. Peter, like a good shepherd, has warned us; and every day Mother Church brings it to our mind as a fact of great importance: *Brethren, be sober and watch, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him manfully, and let not yourselves be carried away by his deceits and persuasions* (I Pet. v. 8).

CHAPTER XX

How We Should Behave in Temptations of Evil and Impure Thoughts, and of Remedies against Them

ON this subject the first thing to observe is that there are some who grieve and afflict themselves greatly when they are assailed by evil thoughts of blasphemy, or against faith, or foul and impure thoughts, in so much that sometimes they fancy that the Lord has forsaken and forgotten them, and that they must be in His ill graces, since such things pass through their mind. This is a great mistake. Gerson tells of a monk who led a hermit's life in the desert, who was much tempted and afflicted with thoughts of blasphemy and other thoughts very foul and filthy, and suffered this temptation for twenty years without daring to tell anyone, thinking that it was a thing unheard of and unseen, and that anyone who heard of it would be shocked.

At last, at the end of twenty years, he went to a very ancient and experienced father, but even then did not dare tell him by word of mouth, but wrote what he had to say on a paper and gave it to him. The old man read his paper and began to laugh, and said to him: "Put your hand on my head." When he did so, the old man said: "I take all this sin of yours upon myself; let it not be on your conscience any more in future." The monk stood amazed, and said: "But how? I thought myself already in hell, and do you say that I am to take no account of it?" The old man said to him: "Did you perchance take any pleasure in these evil and impure thoughts?" "Good heavens," he said, "no, but great pain and torment." "But at that rate," said the holy man, "it is clear that this was no doing of yours, but you suffered it against your will, the devil using this means to drive you thereby into despair. So, my son, take advice, and if henceforth these evil thoughts return to you again, say: 'On thy head, malignant spirit, be this blasphemy and this filthy thought; I have no mind to take any part in it, but I believe and hold all that Mother Church believes and holds, and would give my life rather than offend my God.' " Herewith the monk was cured, and from that time forward the temptation came to him no more. Here be it noted, by the way, for the benefit of those who fail to manifest their temptations for the difficulty they feel in doing so, how much greater pain and torment it is not to declare them than to declare them. For twenty years was this monk in great affliction and torment for not manifesting his temptation; and on manifesting it he became quiet and peaceful. How much pain would he have saved himself if he had done at the beginning what he did at the end of twenty years! Thus this temptation is no new thing, nor should we lose our wits over it.

It remains to say how we should behave in the like temptations of evil and impure thoughts. Some do not know how to defend themselves under them, since they use much

force and put forth much energy to throw off and resist these thoughts, knitting their brows, wrinkling their foreheads, wagging their heads, shutting their eyes, as though they would say, "No way in here." And sometimes, unless they speak and answer, "I will not," they think they consent. The harm they do themselves by this is greater than the harm the temptation does. There was that courtier of King Saul, uttering loud cries close by his side, and scolding someone else, uttering similar cries at a distance, enough to awaken and disturb the repose of the king (I Kings xxvi. 14) : "Who art thou that criest and disturbest the king?" You are troubling and disturbing your own repose hard by, and do you complain of the temptation coming from afar? Take great notice of this, for it is a thing very apt to break heads, especially of scrupulous people. It is not prayer, nor spiritual exercises, that shatters and breaks heads and ruins health, but the man's own scruples and indiscretions. That is what the devil is aiming at, who knows well how far you are from giving consent. And it is no small but a great gain for him when this works out. This is not a business to be dispatched by shakes of the head.

How, then, ought one to resist and cast off these temptations? The saints and masters of spiritual life say that the method of resistance should not be by struggling to cast them off, wearying and tiring oneself and doing violence to one's imagination, but by taking no notice of them. They illustrate this by sundry comparisons, which, though mean, illustrate it well. When little cur-dogs come out to bark at a passer-by, if he takes no notice of them, they are soon gone; but if he does take notice and turns upon them, they turn upon him to bark. So it happens with these thoughts. Thus the remedy is not to take any notice of them, and in that way they will leave us very quickly. Or we ought to act, they say, like a wayfarer passing along a street, and the air is thick with dust blowing in his face, and he takes

no notice of it, but shuts his eyes and goes his way. And for the greater consolation of those who are molested with this temptation, and that they may completely make up their minds to use this remedy, the saints observe that, however bad the thoughts, we must take no notice of them; or rather, the worse they are, the less notice should we take of them, for their being less dangerous. What worse thoughts can there be than those against God and His saints, against faith and religion? But these are the least dangerous, because the worse they are, the further are they by the grace of God removed from your will and consent. Thus you must not be troubled at their coming upon you, since it is no fault of yours, nor under your control, nor is it you that do it, but you suffer it against your will, the devil contriving it to discourage you, and make you fall into despair or into great sadness and affliction.

It is told of St. Catherine of Siena that one time she was much fatigued and afflicted with these thoughts, when Christ our Redeemer appeared to her, and all these clouds forthwith dispersed. She complained gently to her Beloved: "Alas, Lord, where wert Thou when such things passed through my heart?" He said to her: "Daughter, I was there in the midst of thy heart." "My Jesus, wert Thou in the midst of such foul and evil thoughts?" He said to her: "Tell me, daughter, didst thou perchance take pleasure in having such thoughts?" "O Lord, how the pain of it reached to my very soul, and I do not know what I would not choose rather than entertain them." "But who, then," He said, "made thee detest them but Myself, Who was there?" Thus, however evil and foul be the thoughts that you have, if you take no pleasure in them, but rather pain and annoyance, not only has God not forsaken you, but you may take that for a sign that He dwells in you, since it is He who gives you this abhorrence of sin and this fear of losing God. *I am with him in tribulation*, says the Lord (Psalm xc. 5). God was in the midst of the bush and the thorns and the fire (Exod. iii. 2).

St. Bernard says: "This conflict is painful and troublesome; but for all the pain and affliction thrown into it, so the greater the increase of the reward and crown. Sin is not in the feeling, but in the consenting"—*Non nocet sensus ubi non est consensus*. Blossius says in confirmation of this: "Anyone taking complacency in himself, though once in a while, only makes a worse figure in the eyes of God than one would do, suffering for many years the like motions, however evil, provided there be given no consent." Thus there is no ground for being distressed or for taking much notice of these feelings and thoughts; you should behave in them as though they were passing in the mind of someone else, and not in yours; and you may well reckon that they pass outside of you, says a saint, since evil thoughts are in you only in so far as the will consents and no further; and by your not consenting they gain no entry into your house, but only shout and rap at the door from outside.

Hereupon the masters of spiritual life observe that to get frightened over these things and take much notice of them is not only not a good plan, but evil and hurtful, inasmuch as it increases the temptation. This is borne out by experience, and there is a natural reason for it, and philosophers themselves teach it; for fear rouses the imagination, and thinking and letting the mind waver to and fro for a long time on one thing causes it to make a deeper impression on the memory, whereby increase and life is given to the temptation. We see that a man walks unconcernedly along a narrow plank when it lies on the ground; but when the plank is up in the air, fear makes him walk no longer safe and sure, but in great danger of falling, because fear makes the blood rush to the heart and paralyzes the limbs, so he walks with great danger and comes to fall. This is also the effect of fear and pusillanimity in temptations. Thus it is not well to let fear go all lengths in these temptations, nor take much notice of them, because by not noticing

them they are the sooner forgotten. But here Gerson and others observe that, though this particular fear is not good at such times, yet fear of sin in general is good and very profitable, begging God, "Lord, let me not be separated from Thee," and making acts and resolutions rather to die a thousand deaths than commit a mortal sin, without thinking of or bearing in mind this particular temptation which troubles you at the time.

I add to what has been said another expedient which the saints greatly recommend, and it will serve as a general remedy against all kind of interior temptations. It is, when an evil thought comes, to try and divert the understanding to some good topic or reflection, as death, Christ crucified, or the like. And this must not be by doing violence to the imagination, or tormenting or fatiguing oneself, but simply by stealing oneself away, as they say, from the bad thought and occupying oneself with a good one; as when one man goes up to speak to another, and that other never disengages himself to listen to him or give him room to get anything in; or when they say silly things to a sensible man, and he turns his head away, not caring to listen or reply to them. This is a very good way of resisting those temptations, and a very easy and safe way; for the more we are taken up with a good thought, the further we are removed from consenting to a bad one.

For this purpose it will be a great help to dig and delve down deep at meditation time on some good subjects such as are most apt to move us, familiarizing ourselves therewith. By this means one finds there a refuge ready to hand when one is fatigued and worried with temptations and bad thoughts. Thus for this purpose it is well for each one to have certain harbors of refuge to which he can betake himself in such conjunctures, as people take sanctuary. Some betake themselves to the wounds of Christ, especially to that of His side, and find there very good protection, *in the holes of the rock, in the hollow of the wall* (Cant.

ii. 14). Others find it well to think of death, judgment, and hell. Let everyone put his hand to that which does him most good and moves him most, and endeavor to dig and delve well in one of these grounds, that so he may be able to have ready recourse thereto, and find entry and security in it at such times.

The Abbot Smaragdus tells a very amusing story, but pat to this purpose. He says that a religious one time saw two devils standing chatting together. One said to the other: "You there, how are you getting on with your monk?" "For me, I am doing very well. I put him a thought, and at once he sets to work thinking over it, and makes reflections again and again: *How was that thought? Did I dwell on it? Was there any fault of mine in it? Did I resist it? Did I consent to it? Whence came it to me? Did I give any occasion for it? Did I do all I could?* And with that I twirl him round and round, and drive him half mad." The devil has his way when a man takes to reasonings and questions and answers about the temptation, for there will be never wanting to him arguments and replies. The other devil said: "For me things are going very badly with my monk, for no sooner do I put a bad thought before him than he at once has recourse to God or to some other good thought; or he gets up from his seat and takes up some other occupation, not to think of it or make account of it, and so I cannot get at him."

This is a very good way of resisting these temptations and thoughts, to give them no entry and make them no reply, nor reason at all with the temptation, but turn one's head and avoid facing them or taking any notice of them. It is better when this avoidance and refusal to listen is done by turning the attention to some good thought, as we have said; and when that does not suffice, it is good to take up some exterior occupation.

CHAPTER XXI

That in Different Temptations We Should Behave Differently as to Our Manner of Resisting Them

ST. JOHN CLIMACUS, treating of discretion, says that in different temptations we must resist differently. Some temptations of their nature are sour and painful, as anger, envy, rancor, hatred, desire of revenge, impatience, indignation, bitterness of heart, sulkiness, quarrelsomeness, and the like. Other vices are fraught with pleasure, as carnal sins, eating, drinking, playing, laughing, talking, and other satisfactions of sense. As for this second class of vices, the more we regard them and fix our eyes upon them, the more they attract our heart and draw it after them; against these we must fight by flying from them, keeping away from occasions of them and promptly turning our sight, memory, and consideration away from them. But the former set of vices we should fight by wrestling with them, looking attentively at their nature, malice, and foulness, the better to overcome them. And this is done with less danger because they do not stick so fast, except anger and desire of revenge, where it is also well to steal away from the topic, not thinking of things that may excite us thereto. Thus St. John Climacus, Cassian, and St. Bonaventure teach the same doctrine, and add that in those former vices one may desire to exercise oneself, and meritoriously seek occasions of struggling with them, as by conversing and dealing with persons who persecute and offend you, in order to learn patience, and subjecting yourself to one who altogether thwarts your will, in order to learn obedience and humility. But in carnal vices it would be a very dangerous indiscretion to desire such temptations and put yourself in the occasion of them. So Christ our Redeemer would never suffer Himself to be tempted with this vice, to teach us that in the like temptation we ought not to put ourselves

in the occasion thereof, even though it be in hope of greater reward and triumph, because this vice is very connatural to man and has mingled with it so much pleasure, not in the will alone, but also in the body, which makes its entry more easy and dangerous.

St. Bonaventure brings a good comparison to illustrate this. As an enemy more easily gains entrance and reduces a city when he has within it some who favor his cause, so the devil our enemy has within us what particularly favors him in this temptation, namely, our body, for the great pleasure that it takes herein, according to St. Paul's word: *Every other sin that man commits is outside of the body* (I Cor. vi. 18). In other sins the body has not so much part, but in this it plays a very considerable part, and therefore it is right to remove ourselves from the occasions and shun and cast them away without quarter; and so the Apostle goes on to say: *Fly* with all diligence thoughts and imaginations coming from *fornication* (I Cor. vi. 18).

It is related in the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis that Brother Giles, Brother Rufinus, and Brother Simon of Assisi met together in spiritual conversation; and Brother Giles said to the others: "Brothers, how do you arm against and resist temptations of sensuality?" Brother Simon replied: "Myself, brother, I consider the vileness and shamefulfulness of that sin and how horrible it is, not only in the eyes of God, but even in the eyes of men, who, wicked as they be, hide and cover themselves up that they may not be seen committing a sin of sensuality. And from this consideration there comes over me a great disgust and abhorrence, and so I escape from the temptation." Brother Rufinus said: "I prostrate myself upon the earth, and with many tears I call upon the mercy of God and our Lady, until I find myself perfectly free." Brother Juniper said: "When I feel such diabolical temptations and hear them coming in by the senses of the flesh, I at once that same hour shut with a firm hand the gates of my heart, and set

to guard it a host of holy meditations and good desires. And when these suggestions of the enemy come and batter the gate, I reply as from within: 'I am not for opening on any terms; away with you, away! This room is taken and you cannot enter in here.' And as I never give any entrance to that good-for-nothing crew, they take themselves off, beaten and confused." Brother Giles, having heard them all, replied: "I go with you, Brother Juniper, since with this vice man fights more safely by flying from it." Thus the best way of withstanding this temptation is by giving no entry to it, not letting evil thoughts get into your heart; that is the easier way. But if once the evil thoughts do get in, it will not be so easy, but very difficult to dislodge them. The gate is easily defended; but when that is taken, God help us! See further in the Treatise on Chastity, Volume III. The means there proposed may well help us against other temptations.

CHAPTER XXII

Some Important Pieces of Advice for the Time of Temptation

WE have mentioned remedies enough for temptations; but however many we mention, it is impossible to enumerate them all. Bodily ailments and their remedies are so many and so different that they cannot be put in writing, nor all taught, but much must be left to the decision and judgment of the medical man, that he may apply the remedy which he thinks proper in view of the particular circumstances of the subject; and so it is also in spiritual ailments. Therefore the saints and masters of spiritual life lay it down for a general and very main remedy for all temptations to discover and manifest them to the spiritual physician. But there is one piece of advice which St. Basil gives us in this matter. He says that, as bodily

ailments are not discovered to anybody and everybody, but only to physicians whose business it is to cure them, so temptations and spiritual ailments are not to be discovered to all, but only to those whom God has appointed physicians for this purpose, namely, superiors and confessors, according to the saying of St. Paul: *We who are stronger ought to bear the infirmities of the weak* (Rom. xv. 1). And our rule tells us to have recourse in these matters to the prefect of spiritual things or the confessor or the superior.

This advice is of more importance than, perhaps, some people think. It happens sometimes that one has no mind to discover his temptations to him to whom he ought, and goes and discovers them to someone to whom he ought not, to one, perhaps, to whom he will do harm by discovering them, besides getting harm himself. It may be that the other has the same temptation and weakness; and thus both parties are the more confirmed in it. For this and for other awkward consequences that may ensue, it is very desirable that temptations and spiritual ailments be made known only to spiritual physicians, whose business it is to cure and remedy them, and about whom you may be sure that no harm will be done and benefit will be derived. And so says the Wise Man: *Reveal not thy heart to every man* (Ecclus. viii. 22): *Be on friendly terms with many, but let thy counselor be one in a thousand* (Ecclus. vi. 6).

They give another piece of advice also of much importance for time of temptation, that we should take care at such times to keep up our spiritual exercises and persevere in them with diligence, and greatly beware of leaving them out or cutting them short; because, though the devil gain nothing else by the temptation but to undo us on this point, he will have effected a great deal and reckon himself well paid. Then is the time rather to lengthen out these exercises and to add to them rather than to curtail them; for if the devil wrests out of our grasp the spiritual arms

wherewith we defend ourselves and attack him, it is clear that he will attain his purpose over us all the more easily. Therefore it is most desirable that we should be faithful to God our Lord in times of temptation, and therein His true servants are known. It is not much to persevere in our pious exercises in a fair season with plenty of devotion; but to persevere through storms, temptations, aridities, and desolations is matter of high praise; it is a great sign of true love, and of one who serves God purely for what He is.

A third piece of advice is that in time of temptation one should greatly be on one's guard against making any change or taking new resolutions, for the season is ill-suited for that. In troubled water one sees nothing; let it settle and run clear, and then you will see the pebbles and sands that there are at the bottom. When one is troubled and disturbed by temptation, he cannot well see what befits him. And therefore it is not a good time to deliberate and resolve and determine upon any new project. Let the temptation pass; and when you are quite calm and self-possessed, then you will see better what you ought to do. All the masters of spiritual life insist on this advice; and our Father puts it in his Book of Exercises in the Rules for the Discernment of Spirits. And he gives a good reason therefore: as in time of consolation one is carried and moved by God towards good, so in temptation one is carried and instigated by the devil, at whose instigation no good is ever done.

In the fourth place, it is necessary that in time of temptation we should be careful to make good use of the remedies aforesaid and not fold our arms and be remiss, as will be understood from the following example. It is related in the Lives of the Fathers that there was a monk much molested by the spirit of fornication; and, desiring to get rid of the molestation, he went to one of the approved Fathers of the Desert and said to him feelingly: "Do, venerable father, spend some care and solicitude on me, and

beg God to support me, because the spirit of fornication presses heavily upon me." When the holy old man heard this, he thenceforth entreated God day and night to do something for him. Some days passed, and the monk returned to the father and begged him to pray for him more earnestly, since the temptation stuck to him without mitigation. The father then renewed his supplications to the Lord, sighing and groaning with much insistence, begging the Divine Majesty to strengthen the monk. Again and again the monk returned to him, telling him that his prayers were doing no good; at which the old man was much distressed and marveled that God did not hear him. As he was harassed with this thought, the Lord revealed to him the following night what the reason was why He did not hear him; it was the monk's own negligence and want of determination in his resistance. This was the revelation. He saw that monk seated at his ease, and before him the spirit of fornication, assuming various forms and features of women, playing and making faces, and the monk looking on, taking much pleasure therein; he saw also the angel of the Lord standing by, in great indignation at the monk because he did not get up and have recourse to the Lord, prostrate himself on the earth and pray, and leave off taking delight in those thoughts. Thereby the good old man understood the reason why God did not hear him; it was the monk's own negligence. So the first time that he came back to see him, he said: "It is your own fault, brother, that God does not hear me, inasmuch as you take delight in those evil thoughts. It is impossible for the foul spirit of fornication to depart from you, however much others may entreat God on your behalf, unless you yourself put yourself to the pains of much fasting, praying, and watching, begging God with sighs and prayers to grant you His favor and mercy, and strength to resist evil thoughts. Although physicians administer all necessary medicines to sick people and give them with all care and diligence, small

good will it do them if the patients on their side go on eating unwholesome things. In like manner in the maladies of the soul, although the venerable fathers, who are the physicians of the soul, pray with all the intensity of their hearts to God for those who ask the aid of their prayers, small good will those physicians do if the persons who are tempted do not exercise themselves in spiritual works, saying prayers, fasting, and doing other works agreeable to God." When the monk heard this, he repented with all his heart, and henceforth followed the counsel of the good old man and afflicted himself with fasts, watchings, and prayers, and so deserved the mercy of the Lord and was rid of his temptation. In this way we must behave in temptations, doing what is to be done on our part and taking the means that we ought to take, for in this way the Lord wishes to give us the victory.

And since this resistance to temptations may be greater or less, we should not be satisfied with resisting anyhow, but try to do it in the best way possible. In the chronicles of St. Francis it is related that the Lord showed a great servant of His, a religious of that order named Brother John of Auvergne, the different ways the religious behaved against temptations, especially carnal thoughts. He saw a countless multitude of devils, incessantly shooting arrows at the servants of God. Some of these arrows flew back at the devils who shot them, and they fled away yelling in terror. Others of these arrows shot by the devils hit the religious, but fell at once to the ground without doing them any harm. Others entered the flesh as far as the iron head, and others pierced the body from side to side. According to this vision, then, the best way of resisting, and the way we should aim at, is the first, wounding the devil with the very temptations and arrows wherewith he tries to wound us, and making him take to flight. And this we shall do very well when we draw profit from the temptations wherewith the devil thinks to injure us, as when from the temp-

tations of pride and vanity which the devil brings up we draw greater humiliation and shame; and when from temptation to impurity we draw greater abhorrence of that vice and greater love for chastity, learning to walk with greater recollection and fervor and to have more recourse to God. St. Augustine on those words: *The dragon whom thou hast created to sport with him* (Psalm ciii. 26), says that the servants of God make sport of this dragon, to catch and ensnare him with the same net wherewith he sought to ensnare us, according to that saying of the Royal Prophet: *In the snare that they laid for me, their own foot is caught* (Psalm ix. 16). *Let the trap catch him that he had set hidden for another, and let him fall into his own snare* (Psalm xxxiv. 8). Coming for wool, let him go back shorn. *Let the evil that he desires return upon his own head, and let his iniquity discharge itself on the top thereof* (Psalm vii. 17).

THIRTEENTH TREATISE

OF INORDINATE AFFECTION FOR KINDRED



CHAPTER I

How Important It Is for a Religious to Avoid Visits to Relations and Journeys to His Own Native Place

AS regards the love and affection that we should bear our kindred, our Father lays us down a rule that well suits all religious. "Let each one of those that enter the Society, following the counsel of Christ our Lord, *He that leaveth Father, and so forth* (Matt. xix. 29), account that he is leaving father and mother, and brothers and sisters, and all that he had in the world; nay, more, let him take as spoken to himself that word: *He that hateth not father and mother, yea and his own soul, cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26); and so he ought to endeavor to destroy all the carnal affection that he had for his relations and convert it into spiritual, loving them solely with that love which well-ordered charity requires, as one who, dead to the world and to self-love, lives only for Christ our Lord, holding Him in place of parents and brethren and all things." It is not enough to leave the world in body; we must leave it in heart also, destroying all affections that attach thereto and incline us to worldly things. There is no harm in loving a relation because he is a relation; nay, on that account he ought to be more loved than another person who is no relation of yours; but if this love rests on natural grounds alone, it is not a love peculiar to a Christian, much less to a religious, since all men, however inhuman and barbarous, wish well to their parents and to those who are bound to them by ties of blood.

But the Christian, and much more the religious, says St. Gregory, ought to ennoble this natural love and purify it by fire in the crucible of divine love, and love his kindred, not so much because nature inclines him to love them, as because God commands him to love them. He should cut off everything that might do him harm and separate him

from the love of the Sovereign Good; he should love them solely to the purpose for which God loves them and to that for which He wishes us to love them. And this is the meaning of our rule—that we should eliminate all carnal affection and convert it into spiritual, making of self-love, love of charity; and of love of the flesh, love of the spirit. And the reason is this, that the religious ought to be dead to the world and self-love; and so there ought not to live in him now the love of the world, but solely the love of Christ. And our Father rests this rule on texts of Holy Scripture, a thing that he is not accustomed to do in other rules and constitutions, though he might easily have done it, since the doctrine of our Constitutions is taken from the Gospel; but his one object was to give us this doctrine in the plainness and sincerity in which he had received it from God. But coming to treat of kindred, he at once rests what he says on texts of Scripture, as we see also how, when dealing with the matter of leaving one's property to one's relations, he at once quotes the Scripture text which says, *He distributed and gave to the poor* (Psalm cxi. 9), and the counsel of Christ, *Give to the poor* (Matt. xix. 21). He did not say, *Give to thy relations*, but *Give to the poor*. Our Father saw well that all this was here necessary, for that this affection is so natural, and with it we are all born, and it is so rooted in our hearts and has such a power over us.

This is a matter of great importance for a religious, and is treated of at length by Saints Basil, Gregory, Bernard, and many others. We will put together briefly the substance of it. St. Basil exposes very well how becoming it is for a religious to shun intercourse and conversation with his relations and excuse himself from visits and journeys to the place of his birth. He gives many reasons which will evince the importance of this. Besides the fact of our doing no good among our relations thereby, we get from it much harm to our souls. They tell us of their troubles, their lawsuits, the loss of property and social position, and

all their griefs and vexations; and so we come back to our house laden with all that gives them pain. Moreover, we put ourselves thereby in many occasions of sin in many different ways and manners, because from this association with our relations there readily springs up again the memory of the events of our past life, which is often no small occasion of sin. Thereby old wounds are reopened and bleed afresh, as we call to mind such a house, such a place, such an occurrence, and all that is associated therewith, which recollections may trouble us and do much harm. A strong reason for the harm that this does us may be found in the counsel that masters of spiritual life give, not to call to mind the sins of our past life in detail, even when our aim is to excite grief and contrition for them, but only in general, making, as it were, a bundle of them, that they may not come back to harass us again. How much more harmful would it be for us to take this occasion without necessity! You have no ground afterwards for complaining of the disturbance and harm that you experience, since you have sought it yourself and have got your deserts.

St. Basil further says that they who are fond of conversing with relations, gradually by such conversations imbibe and drink into their souls the evil habits and affections of the same. Thus taken up with worldly thoughts, the soul cools down, loses its fervor of spirit, loses steadfastness and firmness in its first purposes; thus it goes on getting secularized and unconsciously returning to the world, according to that saying of the prophet: *They mingled with the Gentiles, and learned to do as they did, and served their idols and took scandal therefrom* (Psalm cv. 35). What impression could be wrought upon the children of Israel from their stay among the Philistines except their being led to adore their idols and take scandal and ruin from them? The like impression will be wrought in you if you have intercourse with your relations. You will learn their worldly language, their *walking not in truth* (John

viii. 44; II John i. 4; III John i. 3), but with falsehoods, hollow pretenses, and compliments, as is the way of the world; its idols please you, its petty honors and comforts; you are full of presumption and desire to have your own way, which is another bit of worldliness that has infected you.

St. Basil alleges another main reason showing how much it behooves us to shun intercourse and conversation with our relations. It is the great harm done by compassion and natural tenderness. Upon intercourse and conversation with our relations there naturally follows our being overjoyed at their prosperous fortunes, and grieved at their adversities and troubles, and burdened with thoughts and cares, wondering whether they have plenty of all that is needful, what it is that they are in want of, whether this employment they have taken up will prove a success, whether they will come well out of this business in respect of dignity or emolument. All such thoughts and cares go towards weakening and diminishing our virtue and spiritual strength, to such an extent that any subsequent temptation may come to overthrow us; for, says St. Basil, such a one is in the condition of a statue, wearing the habit of religion without having the true spirit of a religious. His body alone is in religion, but his heart is there in the world among his relations.

Cassian tells of a monk who set up his dwelling place near his relations, and they provided him with all necessities, so that he had nothing to do but to attend to prayer and reading. He was very satisfied with the arrangement, taking it for a very quiet and peaceful life. He went one day on a visit to the great Anthony, and the saint asked him where he lived. He answered that he lived near his kinsfolk, that they supplied him with all necessities, and that he had no other occupation but to give his mind to God. "Tell me," asked the saint, "when any affliction comes upon your people, are you saddened thereat? And when things go well with them, do you rejoice at their pros-

perity?" He confessed openly that he shared both the one and the other; necessarily, he said, it could not be otherwise. "Understand then, son," said the saint, "that in the next life you will be counted in the number of those whose partner you have been in this in their joys and sorrows." He will be counted among seculars in the next life who converses with them and about their affairs in this. For this reason, says St. Basil, it is very important for us to avoid intercourse and conversation with our relations; for, after all, as the proverb says, "What eyes see not, heart will not break over." And as the actual giving up of our property, which we do by the vow of poverty, aids us to lose all affection for it; so the actual giving up of our relations, and neither dealing nor conversing with them, will make us forget this fleshly affection and deliver us from the great dangers that follow from it. We must be parted from them in deed to be detached from them in heart; the latter will not follow without the former. Maybe we are parted a long way from them, and yet our heart goes out to them; what would it be if we dealt and conversed with them?

This is the reason why in our order such visits of Ours to their native places are so strictly forbidden, as all know. But that so holy and profitable a prohibition may be possible to be carried into execution, it is necessary that we should help it on; and when your relations ask your superiors to give you leave to go and see them, you should be the first to resist, and persuade them that such a visit is not at all the right thing for you. And for that, sufficient reasons will not fail you if you wish to find them; hereby relations are put off and remain content, to your satisfaction and sometimes also to their own. And this is what superiors desire, and are much edified thereby, when you say that it is not necessary and that you will cancel the proposal with them. For sometimes superiors cannot come to a satisfactory settlement in any other way with

him who asks or with the intercessors whom they sometimes bring in, if you yourself do not come forward in the matter; and so they yield and give a permission which is squeezed out of them—which is not an obedience, but a permission, and the superior had much rather you did not go. This is a very good plan, as well for this as for other like cases. When your relations or friends or penitents ask you to act, or take a hand in some affair which is not suited to our vocation, do not throw all the burden on the superior, obliging him either to break with them or grant their request. Do not push the thing to those lengths; divert your friends from their purpose with civil words, giving them to understand that it is not a thing within the purview of our profession. This is the part of good religious—not as some do, who, not to leave the petitioner offended with them, seek to throw the odium on superiors.

St. Jerome on those words of Christ: *Be ye prudent as serpents* (Matt. x. 16), says: "The example of a serpent is quoted, who with his whole body defends his head, in which his life is seated." So we should always defend our head, who is our superior, and not let it be the other way about; that is to say, we should not expose the head that the body may escape a blow, nor to excuse ourselves throw the blame on the superior. And we should be particularly careful of this in the case I am speaking of. And commonly the whole point of this and other like businesses rests with ourselves. Let one only will it, and the difficulties will easily resolve themselves. And so what I would advise in this matter to anyone who desires to do the right thing is, to begin with, to use all the endeavor he can to excuse himself from these visits; and when excuses fail, let him be compelled thereto by obedience, telling the superior if he apprehends any danger therein; and withal there is ground for apprehension, and he needs to go well prepared.

It is related of the Abbot Theodore that once his mother came to see him, fortified with many letters from bishops

and prelates telling him to receive her. The holy Abbot Pacomius, his superior, gave the requisite permission. He replied: "Father, warrant me that at the day of judgment I shall not have to give an account of this visit, and I will pay it." Then the holy abbot said: "Son, if you think it is not proper for you, I do not oblige you to it." The one would not warrant it; the other would not pay the visit unless the superior took it on his conscience; and there the matter rested. And it turned out well; for his mother determined to take up her abode in a monastery of nuns hard by, of which those monks had care, with hopes of seeing some time amongst them her son. He did well in declining to pay those visits except out of pure obedience, and with his superior taking the matter on his conscience. That is the way for a good religious to visit his native place, when that has to be. And if we were well aware of what commonly comes of these visits, we should be more afraid of them and more eager to excuse ourselves from making them. Histories and lives of the Fathers are full of instances of monks' coming to grief from such journeys. It would be well for us to gather experience at the expense of others and not suffer the loss in our own persons.

St. Basil writes: "If you are dead with Christ to your parents and kindred, why return again to their society and company? See what a bad case it is to take back again what you have once left for Christ's sake; wherefore beware how you desert your post, your quiet and recollection, for the sake of your kinsfolk, lest in leaving your post you also leave your religious spirit and training"—a thing that often happens. Jesus is not found among His kinsmen and acquaintance (Luke ii. 44-45). "How should I find Thee among my relations, O good Jesus, when Thou wert not found among Thine own?" asked St. Bernard. If you wish to find Him, seek Him not among your relations, but in the Temple, in prayer, in recollection, and you shall find Him. Of Father Francis Xavier we read in his Life

that, when he came from Rome to Portugal to go thence to the Indies, he passed within four leagues of his native place, and never would go there to visit his relations and his mother, who was still alive, [*morte depuis longtemps* Brou, i. 87] for any importunity, though he knew that, if he let that opportunity slip, he should never have another of seeing them again. The like did Father Master Peter Faber, passing within five leagues of his home. And our blessed Father Ignatius, when he was forced to go to Loyola, would not lodge in his brother's house, but in the hospital.

CHAPTER II

That a Religious Should Also Avoid, as Far as Possible, Being Visited by His Relations and Any Communication with Them by Letter

A GOOD religious, who heartily desires to serve God and occupy himself with his spiritual progress and the end for which he came into religion, must not only shun these visits to relations and returns to his native place, even on an excuse, but must try to avoid as far as he can all manner of intercourse with his kinsmen. Not content with himself not going to visit them, he must further try not to be visited by them. St. Ephrem says that we must use all persuasion with our relations not to visit us, except at most once or twice a year; and he adds: "But if you can altogether cut off their useless conversation, you will do better." With good reason does he call it "useless," and our Father in his Constitutions applies the same term, for useless it is; and not only without profit, but very harmful, as we have said. And that we may understand how pleasing to God is this austere detachment and keeping out of the way of our relations and avoiding their visits, the Lord has been pleased to show and confirm the same by miracles.

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a holy monk named Cyriacus, who on one occasion when his parents and relations had come to see him and were calling out at the door of his cell, knowing thereby the folk that were there and what they had come for, first made prayer to our Lord, begging Him to deliver him from them and arrange things so that they should not see him. Having made this prayer, he opened his door and came out of his cell, without any of those people seeing him, nor getting to see that anyone had gone out. So he got clear off, making his way to the interior of the desert, and would not come back until he was quite sure that they had gone. Of the holy Abbot Pacomius, Surius relates how a sister of his came to see him, but he would not go out to see her, nor let her see him, but sent her a message by the porter: "You have heard that I am alive and well; go in peace." And the answer did her much good, as in the case of the mother of Theodore, for she settled down in a monastery of nuns that was near there and became a religious.

A good religious should contrive to excuse himself, not only from visits, but also from communication by letters, so far as he can, for this also is a source of disturbance and agitation of mind. As by not visiting them you deliver yourself from many visits, so by not writing to them you deliver yourself from many letters of theirs. That holy man (A Kempis) very well says: "If you know how to let men alone, they will let you alone to go about your own business." All depends on what you want; if you want, you will find means for everything that you do want. We have already left our native place, our home and kindred, for God. Let us complete the step by abandoning them altogether; so we shall be free and disengaged to remember God the more and love and serve Him the more.

Cassian tells of a holy monk, very much given to prayer and contemplation and very careful to preserve that purity and cleanness of heart which such exercises require. He

had lived fifteen years in the desert, when at the end of that time they brought him a great packet of letters from his native place, which was in the Province of Pontus, from his parents, relations, and friends. He took his packet, and set himself to thinking and turning over in his mind: If I read these letters, what a multitude of thoughts will they raise in me! What various waves of emotion will rise thereupon in my heart—of vain joy if I find that my relations are doing well, or useless and unprofitable sadness if I find them in bad luck! For how many days will the memory of those who have written to me be forcing itself on my mind, and rob me of the repose and tranquillity of my prayer and contemplation! For how many days will there be represented and set before me the outlines and features of their faces, and the remarks they will make to me, and the things they will write to me! When shall I finally forget and rase from my memory these images! What a labor it will be to return to the state of tranquillity and forgetfulness of worldly things I now enjoy! What will it profit me to have left my relations in body if in heart and memory I return to them and converse and amuse myself with them! So saying, and turning these things over in his heart, he takes the packet of letters just as they had come and flings it into the fire, saying: "Away with you, ye thoughts of flesh and blood, and burn ye all along with these letters, that ye may not make me return to that which I have left." Not only would he not read any letters, but he would not even open them or see the names and signatures of the writers, or even look at the addresses to recognize the hand, that they might not bring back upon him the memory of the writers nor hinder the tranquillity and peace of his heart. We read a similar example of our blessed Father Ignatius. A very good lesson for those who are not satisfied with one read of their letters, but keep them carefully put away to read them again and again, and lick their lips and enjoy the taste of them, refreshing the

memory of their kindred. Now that you have not burned them before reading them, why do you not burn them as soon as read, and with them get rid of all thoughts of flesh and blood, that they may not trouble you more?

CHAPTER III

That Even though It Be under Plea of Preaching, a Religious Should Shun Intercourse with His Relations and Visits to His Native Place

THIS temptation of going to one's native place and visiting and conversing with one's relations comes to some under pretense of preaching to them and doing good to their souls. When temptations come in this way, disguised under color and appearance of good, they are apt to be more dangerous, since they are not taken for temptations, but for good motives. On the words: *Catch for us the little foxes that destroy the vineyards* (Cant. ii. 15), St. Bernard says that this is one of those little foxes that are apt to get in under a deceitful appearance of good, and destroy and ruin many. And the saint says that he knew some who had come to ruin by this. They thought to gain others, and lost themselves; especially since kinsmen are not ordinarily fit persons to do spiritual good to kinsmen, since, as they knew them yesterday, when they went playing with them, they do not treat them with the esteem and respect that a Gospel preacher requires. So said Christ our Lord: *No man is a prophet in his own country* (Luke iv. 24). And when God wished to make Abraham a great preacher and father of the faithful, He bade him go out from his country and the society of his relations, friends, and acquaintances and betake himself to Mesopotamia, where no one knew him. And here is a thing worthy of consideration. When St. Paul was at Jerusalem praying in the Temple, God bade him depart from thence and go

preaching to the Gentiles, "for here in Jerusalem you will do no good"—*non recipient testimonium tuum de me* (Acts xxii. 18). "O Lord, but here they know me, a disciple at the feet of Gamaliel, and know that I persecuted them that believed in Thee; and when they were stoning St. Stephen, I kept their clothes." "Go to, you understand not; go out of this country where you are well known, and I will make you a preacher to the Gentiles. Go where you are not known, and there you will do much good." And think you that you will do good in your native town? What fruit can you gather there among your relations? How shall you be able to preach and persuade them to despise the world and its comforts when they see you enjoying and amusing yourself in the world in the midst of flesh and blood?

Peter de Ribadaneira in one of his manuscript dialogues relates an amusing example of what befell one of the Society, who, overcome by his mother's loving entreaties, was visiting her at her house in Messina. He says that one day a priest in the church was engaged in exorcizing an evil spirit, who was in possession of a poor woman, in a crowd of spectators. In an evil moment this religious came in and wanted to help the priest, so he began threatening the wicked spirit and bidding him in the name of God to go out of that body. The spirit gave no answer but "Mummy, Mummy." All quite entered into the fun of the answer, since they knew and were quite aware of the reason of his visit, and he remained very much abashed and put out of countenance. Now the same answer they will be able to make to you when in your native place you preach to others that they should mortify themselves and renounce the comforts and amusements of the world.

Sulpicius Severus relates another example to this purpose, not amusing but terrifying. He says that a young man of Asia, very rich in temporal goods and of illustrious lineage, married and had a son. He was at the same

time tribune of Egypt; and on the journeys that he used to take at times on the business of his office, he had occasion on one of them to pass through the desert in which the Fathers lived, where he saw many monasteries and cells of monks. He entered into conversation with the Abbot John, who spoke to him of the affairs of his soul and salvation. Such an impression did the conversation make on him that he returned no more to his own house, but renounced the world and began in the desert a life so admirable, and took so much to heart the practice of virtue, that in a short time he was ahead of many of the old men. While the wind was blowing astern so favorably, there came upon him a strong temptation that it would be better to return to the world and see to the salvation of his wife and child, since he was now so disenchanted from its vanities that the benefit should not be for himself alone. Under this appearance of charity the devil deceived him. So after he had been four years in the desert, he took the road leading to his birth-place. Passing by a monastery, he called upon the monks and acquainted them with his intention. They all told him that it was a temptation of the devil and that many had been befooled in that way. He did not believe them, but stood fast to his own view, took leave of the monks, and sought to go on with his journey. Hardly had he gone out of the monastery, when our Lord permitted a devil to enter into his body and torment him mightily, making him gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth. He was dragged in men's arms into the monastery, and there it was necessary for the violence of his raving to cast him into prison and tie his hands and feet. And though the monks besought God for him, and exorcized the devil, the Lord permitted that it should not leave him till two years were over. Then he was delivered and returned "a sadder and a wiser man" to his former place and monastic life—a great lesson to the others to persevere in the way they had begun and not let themselves be deceived under those false appearances of

piety. Hence it will be seen how far a religious ought to be from those journeys to his native place and visits to his relations; since if, even when it is done under plea of preaching to them and producing fruit in their souls, saints say it is a temptation, having in it many inconveniences and dangers. What must it be when it is done solely for their comfort and consolation or one's own!

CHAPTER IV

*That a Religious Should Stand Particularly on His Guard
against Occupying Himself with the Business
Affairs of His Relations*

ABOVE all a religious should be very careful not to charge and occupy himself with the business affairs of his relations, for the many very awkward consequences and dangers which that involves. St. Gregory says: "There are many who, after having given up their properties and all that they had in the world, and what is more, themselves, putting down and making small account of themselves and trampling with equal constancy on prosperity and adversity, have let themselves be fettered with the ties of flesh and blood. Unwisely desirous of complying with this obligation and prompted by affection for flesh and kindred, they return to things that they had left and forgotten. Forgetful of their profession and making more of what they owe to their families, they occupy themselves with family business and external affairs. They go into audience chambers and before tribunals, entangle themselves in the meshes of the law and earthly things, give up their interior peace and quiet, and plunge anew into worldly concerns to the imminent risk of their souls." St. Isidore says the same: "Many religious for love of their relations plunge not only into earthly concerns, but into lawsuits and litigations, and

for the temporalities of their kindred forfeit the eternal salvation of their own souls."

This is one of the greatest bottoms and bogs that there are on this ground, when fleshly affection comes to overmaster a religious so far as to make him take over the care of the business affairs of his kindred and charge himself therewith, as we see and experience more than we could wish, for our sins. St. Basil says that this comes because the devil, envious at seeing a religious lead a heavenly life on earth, living in the body as though he lived without it and steadily gaining what he has lost, strives under pretext of piety and even of duty to hamper religious with these cares, that so they may lose the peace and quiet of their souls, and go lukewarm in the love they had for God and the fervor with which they were traveling to perfection. It is quite a sight to see the vigorous effort that the devil makes here, making a tool of these same kinsfolk till it looks as though they had no resource in all their businesses, suits, and differences, and in all their marriages and embarrassments, but to have immediate recourse to their relation in religion. He has to be like the contractor who is responsible for the meat supply to the town; they take it for granted that he is the man readiest to hand, the man who has most free time, the man who has nothing else to think of but to attend to their business. The Carthusian, Louis of Saxony, says very well, speaking of prelates and secular clerics: "God has taken sons away from the clergy, and the devil has given them nephews." And he quotes the same in verse:

*Cum Factor rerum privaret semine clerum,
Ad Satanae votum successit turba nepotum.*

For this end Satan contrives to bring up your cousin's affairs in the courts, and your female relative's settlement in marriage, to get you on the dance and withdraw you from your post and profession. That is his object—not the

good of your relations, but your hurt and loss. Unhappy religious! Did he leave his property and his rank and his conveniences and comfortable estate, all to rid himself of these cares and embarrassments, and is he here to burden himself with other people's worries and be as one under contract to manage all the affairs of his kith and kin, and lose thereby the fruit of his vocation? That was a good answer of the Abbot Apollo, as related by Cassian. One night when he was in his cell, a brother of his came to him to ask him to come out and help to draw out an ox that had fallen into a pool or morass, since he could not draw it out by himself. Abbot Apollo asked him: "Why did you not call upon that other brother of yours who was there?" He answered: "Why, he has been dead now fifteen years." Then said Apollo: "Know, my brother, that I have been dead now twenty years, and buried in this cell; so I cannot come out of it to help you." This is how a religious ought to behave in like occasions; and if he does not know how to shake off the cares and businesses of his relations, let him hold it for certain that he will receive great injury to his soul, even though it be under pretext of piety and however much he may seek to justify it.

"How many religious," says St. Jerome, "under pretext of piety and a false compassion for their kindred have lost their souls and come to a bad end!" Daily experience shows it us, and many examples. How many have lost their vocation and ceased to be religious from meddling with the cares of their kinsmen's estate and trying to advance their rank! How many apostates from their order do we see in these ways, who have gone off to comfort their parents, and afterwards serve for nothing but to devour their substance and bring their old age to sorrow by their evil life! So St. Basil calls this an arm or arrow of the devil, which we ought greatly to eschew, since he takes it for an instrument and means to do us vast mischief.

And let no one assure himself in this matter, or think that the whole proceeding is sanctified, purified, and passed by obedience. As we said of visits to relations and journeys to one's native place, so it is here. In many cases superiors had rather you did not mix yourself up with the business of your kinsfolk, thinking such avoidance the better course, but they allow it because they do not see in you virtue enough for anything else. That is not obedience, but simple permission; the superior comes down to your weakness, and he rather does your will than you do his. If that monk we spoke of would not visit his mother because the superior would not take it on his conscience, how much more reasonable will it be for you not to plunge into or meddle with the business affairs of your relations, except it be purely out of obedience, your superior saying that he takes it upon his conscience, seeing the danger there is in them.

CHAPTER V

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

THEY tell of the holy Abbot Poemen (Ποιμήν, Pastor, John x. 11) that there came once to Egypt a judge who, having heard of the fame and reputation of the saint, desired to see him, and therefore sent a messenger to beg of him to be so good as to receive him, since he wished to pay him a visit. Poemen was sad and put out at this message, thinking within himself that, if distinguished persons began to come and visit him and pay him honor, many of the common people would at once flock round him and disturb him in his solitary life and exercises; and the devil would destroy and rob him of the grace of humility, which with so much labor, by favor of the Lord, he had managed to gain and preserve from his youth upwards, and so he might fall into the snare of vainglory. Thinking these

things over, he determined to excuse himself and not receive the visit. The judge was greatly grieved at this, and said to one of the officers of the court: "I put it down to my sins that I cannot see this man of God." Thenceforth he desired to see him by any occasion that offered. In the end he hit upon a plan which seemed to him sufficient to compel Poemen to receive his visit with a good grace, or himself to come out of the desert and pay him a visit. The plan was this. He arrested a nephew of the abbot, his sister's son, and put him in prison; and secretly told his officer that, not to distress the holy old man by his nephew's imprisonment, he was sending him a message to the effect that, if he would come and see the judge, the prisoner at once should have his discharge, although the matter against him was so grave and incriminating that it should not be let pass without severe punishment. When the prisoner's mother heard this and understood that, if her brother would visit the judge, the prisoner should be set free, off she went to the desert and began to knock at the door of her brother's cell, with many cries and sobs and abundance of tears begging him to go and see the judge and plead for her boy. St. Poemen, though he heard her, said nothing to her, and would not open the door for her to come in. Seeing this, his sister grew angry and began to call him injurious names: "Cruel and hard-hearted man, with bowels of steel, how is it that my great grief and lamentations move you not to compassion, understanding that my boy, the only son I have, is in danger of death!" Poemen, who heard this, said to the monk his companion, who waited on him: "Go and give her a message in these words: 'Poemen never had sons, and so does not mourn over them.'" With this message his sister went away disconsolate. The judge learned what had happened in the desert; and, seeing that the abbot excused himself from coming to visit him, he said to certain friends of his: "Persuade him at least to write to me a petition for his release." Many persons

pressed this message on Poemen and begged him to write to the judge. Wearied with their importunities, he wrote in these terms: "Let your honor command diligent inquiry to be made into the case of this youth; and if he has done anything worthy of death, let him die, that he may pay in the present life the penalty of his sin and thereby escape the everlasting pains of hell."

A similar story is told in the Lives of the Fathers of the holy Abbot Pastor, that they could not induce him to intercede for a nephew of his who was condemned to death, not to implicate himself in things touching flesh and blood.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that he never would concern himself with the marriage of his niece, the heiress and lady of the house, nor write a letter on her behalf, much as he was entreated by sundry great lords, as the Dukes of Nejera and Alburquerque. He answered them that these affairs did not concern him and were not in keeping with his profession, since it was so many years that he had said good-bye to these cares and become dead to the world; that it was not well for him to take up anew what he had abandoned so long before, and deal with matters foreign to his vocation, and put on the garment that he had stripped himself of, and dirty once more the feet which by the grace of God, at so much cost to himself, he had washed when he went away from home (Cant. v. 3).

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read in his Life that they could never prevail with him to supplicate his holiness for a dispensation for his son, Don Alvero de Borgia, to marry his niece, daughter of his sister, Doña Juana de Aragon, who had inherited the marquisate of Aleañices; and this though his son was so interested in the matter, since it was a question of inheriting so handsome an estate; added to the fact that the pope bore him great good will to favor him and whatever touched his interests. And it is said there in his Life that in his dealing with the emperor there happened another case of the same sort, to the emper-

or's great edification, who thence understood the truth of what had been told to him of the detachment of Father Francis from his children, how he behaved to them as though they were not his children.*

Let us consider here what business affairs these saints withdrew from, though they might have dispatched them so speedily; and see on the other hand in what affairs some religious are immersed nowadays. If those illustrious men, holy as they were, were so afraid of dealing with such matters, how is it that we, who are not so holy and therefore run greater risk, are not afraid? I believe that the reason why we are not afraid is because we are not so holy; and that, if we were quite in earnest in our pursuit of holiness and perfection, we should dread the great dangers that lurk in such matters, and fly from them as we see the saints did.

CHAPTER VI

Of Other Evils and Losses Caused by Affection for Kindred, and How Christ Our Redeemer Taught Us to Keep Out of Their Way

THE blessed St. Basil says that this natural affection and tenderness for kindred is apt at times to bring a religious into a situation in which he comes to commit sacrilege, by stealing from his order to succor his relations. And though the man does not take from one's order to give to his family, he takes from what devout people had to give to the order; and from here and from there, from penitents and friends, he goes looking for something to give to his relations; and that sometimes turns to the prejudice of his ministries because he cannot use such liberty

* Histoire de S. Francois de Borgia par P. Suau S. J. ch. vii., pp. 477-500, Relation de Famille.

in dealing with those whose help he needs and to whom in this way he stands indebted. In other ways there is some scruple of conscience about the vow of poverty, whether they give me the gift for myself, or whether they give it me for somebody else; and again, whether I give the gift or somebody else gives it on his own account. Add to this, this affection for kindred blinds a man's eyes to such an extent that he takes no heed of these particulars, thinking that lawful which sometimes is unlawful, and thinking that not against the vow of poverty which really is so. And though you do not come to steal anything else from your order, yet in the time that you waste on the business of your family there is theft and fraud enough, since, as St. Basil says, you are not your own, but belong to your order, to which you have offered as well your person as all your works and labors. For this reason your order has care, not of your soul alone, but also of your body, giving you all that it requires; yet here you are receiving your sustenance from your order and at the same time busying yourself in the service of your kinsfolk. All this is stealing on your part, besides the disedification you give to those who see you so attached and tied down to your kith and kin.

Not without great reason did Christ our Redeemer say: *If any man cometh to me, and hateth not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea and his own soul, he cannot be my disciple* (Luke xiv. 26). Hereupon St. Gregory well observes that in the same way in which He commands us to hate ourselves, He commands us also to hate our parents and relations. As you have to conceive a holy hatred against yourself, mortifying and denying yourself in all that the flesh asks against the spirit and against reason and not giving in thereto, because that is the greatest enemy that you have; so also you have to conceive a holy hatred against your parents and relations, not giving in to them, but denying them in all that may be an obstacle to your salvation and to your

spiritual advancement and perfection, because they are a part of yourself and likewise your enemies. *And a man's enemies are the people of his own house* (Mich. vii. 6; Matt. x. 36).

It is related in the chronicles of St. Francis how a man said to holy Brother Giles that in any case he was determined to be a religious. The servant of God answered him: "If you are determined to do that, go first and kill all your relations." The man begged him with tears not to oblige him to commit such sins. Brother Giles answered: "How come you to be so lacking in understanding? I did not bid you to kill them with a material sword, but with the sword of the spirit; for according to the word of the Lord he that hateth not his father and mother and relations cannot be His disciple." It is worthy of consideration how many times over our Savior repeats this doctrine in His holy Gospel. St. Basil notes this, and quotes these two instances. The first is that of the young man who wished to follow Christ, but begged Him to allow him to go first and dispose of his estate and inheritance, to whom Christ replied: *No man putting his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke ix. 62). It is looking back when, having begun to put your hand to the plough of the evangelical counsels, you turn back to implicate yourself in the business of the world which you have left. Dread the sentence of Christ, that this means being unfit for the kingdom of God. The second instance is that of the other young man who also wished to follow Christ, but begged leave to go and bury his father, such a proper thing to do and a thing that could be done in a short time; and He gave him not leave, but replied: *Let the dead bury their dead* (Luke ix. 60). The phylactery observes: "If he was not allowed even to bury his father, woe to them who, after making profession of monastic life, return to secular business."

And Christ was not satisfied with warning us in word and by the examples of other people, but by His own exam-

ple He would commend to us this avoidance of kindred, as is seen in many passages of the Gospel, even to the length of outwardly seeming to show rigor and severity to His most holy Mother, as in the apparent rebuff which He gave her when she had found Him in the Temple: *How is it that ye sought me? did you not know that I must be found at the business of thy Father?* (Luke ii. 49). And at the wedding, when the wine ran short: *What business is it of ours to look to that?* (John ii. 4). This to teach us, says St. Bernard, the way to deal with our relations when they seek to distract us from the end and aim of our profession; we are to put them off, saying: "It behooves us to attend to the business of God and our salvation." And to that other who said: *Master, bid my brother share the inheritance with me:* He answered dryly: *Man, who hath appointed me judge to divide between you?* (Luke xii. 14), thereby to teach us that we ought to keep out of the like businesses, which are not consistent with our profession.

CHAPTER VII

How This Temptation Is Apt to Disguise Itself Not Only under the Appearance of Piety, but of That of Duty, and the Remedy to Be Applied Thereunto

SINCE this temptation is apt at times to make its way and avail itself not only of the pretext of piety, but even of duty—and these are the most dangerous temptations—to prevent and obviate the great mischief that might otherwise result in the Society, our Father in his Constitutions enacts that all who enter it should be asked whether in case of any doubt arising as to their being bound to go to the aid of parents or relations, they will let themselves be guided by what the Society and the superior thereof shall ordain and not allow themselves to be carried away by their own judgment. For in an affair of relations, as in an

affair of our own, affection blinds us and readily leads us astray, so that we cannot be good judges in such a case. For the quietening of all consciences and the banishment of all scruple, our Father has provided this remedy. Therefore everyone is bound to acquiesce in what the Society shall tell him in this matter, there being in our body so much learning and so much fear of God; and he will find its decision quite conformable to sound theology and conscience. To this end the proposal is made and the question asked at the outset of everyone who wishes to enter the Society, and they do not receive him unless he is ready to submit to this. We owe many thanks to God that we can securely throw off all solicitude on this point, and so are left free to apply more earnestly to our advancement and perfection.

For this same reason our Father also directs that, when one of our Society makes his renunciation of property and there is question of dividing the property among his relations on the score of their being poor, he must leave it to the judgment of two or three learned and conscientious persons, to be chosen by the individual with approval of the superior, and it is for them to judge whether his relations are really poor and are in real need, to the end that affection for flesh and blood may not lead him astray. Thus to give away one's property to strangers, this consultation is not necessary, but to give it to one's relations it is required, on account of the danger of natural love and affection. So St. Gregory observes on that case in which Christ forbade a young man to go to bury his father (Luke ix. 60), that what He would not have forbidden him to do for a stranger, but rather would have advised it, and it would have been a work of mercy, He forbids in the case of his father, to give us to understand that what may be done for strangers often cannot be done with propriety for relations, on account of the danger that usually attaches to it and the disedification of those who see a religious involved and embarrassed in things of flesh and blood. It is clear that

one behaves in a different way in the business of a stranger from that in which one acts in the affairs of one's own kinsmen and relations; for the former is done without anxiety and disturbance, but the latter, as experience shows, causes great restlessness and robs a man of the peace of his soul, and stands greatly in the way of his spiritual exercises. Thus, when at times it may be necessary to give some help to relations, the better and safer course for the man himself and the more edifying for neighbors is that some other father should take charge of the transaction, and he be out of it. And in the Society we have an order that the thing be done in that way, and such is the teaching of St. Basil. Besides, when a man is employed on his own in these matters, if there be in him anything of the world and of the flesh, he would wish his people not to be poor, nor to suffer, while God would have them be poor and suffer need, that being more expedient for them for their salvation, and for him for his humiliation. There is also another vanity and folly apt at times to come in here, in that some religious make it their aim and endeavor that their parents and relations may be more and have more than they would have been and would have had but for some of their family being religious. Herein those persons show that they are religious but in name only, since, where they ought to be more humble, they display more vanity and presumption.

And for our sins we have experience more than we could wish, how many under this pretext are tempted in their vocation, and contrive to leave their order under color of providing for the needs of their parents or brothers. I go further and say that such persons, commonly speaking, do not start from this, nor is this the main cause that makes them falter in their vocation, but other hidden causes that they themselves know—to wit, their small stock of virtue and mortification, the weakness they feel in themselves for bearing the rigor and perfection of religious life, *that is*

what makes them flag therein; and as they cannot openly quote this title, they have recourse to others that are more or less colorable. That it is so, we have practical experience daily, and see the cause clearly working in its effects. Oftentimes these renegades have it not in their power to meet the necessities they speak of, nor do they meet them by quitting their order; they would do their families more good by staying in it. That is not their motive in leaving their vocation, but a desire of liberty and living at their ease. *Thou hast not lied to men, but to God* (Acts v. 4). You can never deceive God. Woe to him that begins to hobble and halt, and not acquiesce in what his superiors and his constitutions tell him!

Finally, it is the proper means for gaining the end for which we came into religion, to withdraw from the conversation and affairs of our relations and give them the go-by. He will keep well the commandments of God and the counsels of his profession who, the better to serve God, forgets his relations, and says to father, mother, and brothers, *I know you not* (Deut. xxxiii. 9). St. Bernard says very well, and it is the common doctrine of the saints, that the religious ought to be like another Melchisedech, of whom the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. vii. 9) says he was without father, or mother, or lineage—not that he had none, because, being a real man, he could not be without them, but he is said to have had none because Holy Writ, speaking of him by reason of his priesthood, mentions nothing of this, nor of the beginning or end of his days, to give us to understand that priests (and much more religious) must be detached from all that sort of thing as though they had nothing of it, and as dedicated to spiritual and divine things as though they had dropped down from heaven. Thus they should be at heart like another Melchisedech, having nothing in the world to hold them back or hinder or retard their eager haste to go on their way to God. Let us conclude, then, with the conclusion made by St. Bernard: “Recollect thy-

self and sit apart, away from the multitude of the rest of men; *forget, too, thy native place and thy father's house, and God shall desire thy beauty* (Psalm xlv. 11)." St. Jerome on these words of the prophet says: "A great thing it must be for a man to forget his parents and relations, since such a great reward is promised him for it, that God shall desire his beauty."

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Francis it is related that there entered the order at Paris a master in theology, whose mother had supported him by alms and out of much poverty till she placed him in that rank. Hearing that her son had become a friar, she came to the convent, and with many tears and importunities entreated and cried out to her son, baring her breasts and putting before him the labors with which she had reared him and the need and misery in which he was leaving her. The master was moved by these tears to abandon his purpose, and determined to leave his order the next day. Feeling a great struggle going on in his heart about this, he had recourse to prayer according to his custom and, prostrate before the figure of a crucifix, he said in the agony of his heart: "Lord, I do not wish to abandon Thee! Never do Thou permit such a thing; I wish only to succor my mother, who is in sore need." Saying these words, he raised his eyes to the figure and saw that from the Savior's side there was streaming real blood, and therewith he heard a voice that said to him: "Thou hast cost Me more than thou hast thy mother, seeing that I have created thee and redeemed thee with this blood; thou oughtest not to leave Me for love of thy mother." The master was overpowered with this warning; and, preferring the love of Jesus Christ to the natural love of his mother (who was trying to move him by her necessities to leave that state of life), he persevered in the order and ended his days in it with much praise.

Though in this treatise it seems that we have spoken only to religious, yet if seculars would draw a lesson from it as

we desire, not to disturb religious, nor implicate them in their affairs, nor intrigue with the government of the order, trying to get a relation or a friend to come and stay with them, that will be no small fruit gained as well for them as for us.

FOURTEENTH TREATISE



CHAPTER I

Of the Great Mischiefs That Follow from Sadness

PUT sadness far from thee, says the Wise Man, for there is no profit in it, and it hath been the death of many (Ecclus. xxx. 24). Cassian composes a book on the spirit of sadness, for, he says, to come and remedy this ailment and infirmity, no less care and diligence is necessary than for the other spiritual infirmities and temptations that present themselves in this life; this for the many great mischiefs that follow from it, which he proceeds there to enumerate, founding his enumeration well on Holy Scripture. Beware, he says, of sadness. Let it not enter into your heart; for if you give way to it and it begins to take a hold upon you, thereupon it will make you lose all taste for meditation; you will think the hour long and not complete it entirely; and sometimes it will make you go altogether without meditation and drop spiritual reading; and into all your spiritual exercises it will infuse such a weariness and loathing that you will be unable to face them. *My soul hath fallen asleep for weariness* (Psalm cxviii. 28), a verse, says Cassian, in which the prophet well exposes the mischiefs which follow from sadness. He does not say that his body has fallen asleep, but his soul, for with sadness and spiritual sloth there comes over the soul such a weariness and disgust for all spiritual exercises and all works of virtue that she is, as it were, asleep, benumbed and incapable of any good. Sometimes even so great is the loathing that a man conceives for spiritual things, that he goes the length of molesting and insulting those who are on the way of virtue and perfection, endeavoring to stop them and withdraw them from their practices of piety.

There is another thing about sadness, says Cassian, that it makes a man disagreeable and rude to his brethren. St. Gregory says sadness moves to anger and peevishness; and

so we find by experience that when we are sad we are easily irritated and have an outburst of temper at anything that comes in our way. Further, it makes a man impatient over the business he has in hand; it makes him suspicious and evil-minded: and sometimes sadness upsets a man so entirely that he seems to have lost his senses and be quite out of his mind, according to the saying of Ecclesiasticus: *There is no sense where there is bitterness* (xxi. 15), no judgment where there is bitterness and sadness. We often see that, when sadness and melancholy reign in a man, he gets such out-of-the-way apprehensions and such groundless suspicions and fears, as to become an object of ridicule to people in their senses, and they talk of him as of a person out of his mind. We have seen grave personages, men of great learning and abilities, so overpowered by this passion that it was a pity to see them, some of them crying like babies, others heaving such deep groans as sounded nothing short of bellowing. And so, when they are in their senses and see that this fit of madness, for so it may well be called, is about to come over them, they shut themselves up in their room, that there they may weep and groan alone by themselves and so not lose credit and reputation with those who see them in that plight.

If you would thoroughly know the mischievous effects that sadness works in the heart, Cassian tells us and the Holy Ghost declares them briefly by the Wise Man: *As a moth in a garment, and as a worm in timber, so doth sadness prey on the heart of man* (Prov. xxv. 20). A moth-eaten garment is worthless and can serve no purpose; and timber full of dry rot is no good for building—no weight can be laid upon it, for it immediately crumbles to pieces; so a man full of melancholy, sadness, and despondency becomes useless for any good works. And the evil does not stop there, but, what is worse, sadness in the heart is the cause and root of many temptations and many falls. *Sadness hath killed many* (Ecclus. xxx. 25); it has made them

fall into sin. So some have called sadness a nest of robbers and a cave of devils, and with good reason. They quote to this effect what holy Job says of the devil: *He sleepeth in the shade* (xl. 16). In that shade and gloom, in the mist and darkness of that confusion which you are in when you are sad, there the devil sleeps and lurks; that is his nest and den; there he lays his bag nets, as they say: that is the attitude of mind that he is looking for, to assail you with all the temptations that he pleases. As snakes and wild beasts watch for the darkness of the night to come out of their holes: *Thou hast brought on darkness, and it hath become night, in it all the wild creatures of the forest shall go about* (Psalm ciii. 20), so the devil, *the old serpent* (Apoc. xii. 9), is awaiting the night and darkness of sadness, and then he assails you with all manner of temptations. *They have their arrows ready, prepared in the quiver, to shoot in the darkness at the right of heart* (Psalm x. 3).

The blessed St. Francis used to say that the devil rejoices much over a sad heart because he easily either plunges it in gloom and despair or turns it to worldly pleasures. Be careful note taken of this teaching, since it is of great importance. When a man is going about sad and melancholy, sometimes the devil leads him on to excess of discouragement and despair, as he did to Cain and Judas. When that game does not seem to pay, he accosts him with worldly delights, or at times with carnal and sensual delights, under pretext that thereby he will get out of the grief and sadness which possesses him. Hence it is that in times of sadness there often come temptations against vocation. The devil represents to the man that there in the world he shall live cheerful and contented; and sometimes sadness and melancholy has drawn men out of religion. At other times the devil brings up carnal and impure thoughts, gratifying to sensuality, and gets the mind to rest on them under the notion that so the sadness will be

cast off and the heart find relief. This is a thing much to fear in the case of sad and melancholy people, in whom such temptations are quite an ordinary thing. St. Gregory well observes that, as man naturally desires some delight and satisfaction, when he does not find it in God and spiritual things, the devil, who well knows our inclination, represents and puts before him sensual and impure objects and offers him gratification and satisfaction therein, thinking that thereby his present sadness and melancholy will be mitigated and relieved. Understand, the saint says, that, if you find no satisfaction and relish in God and spiritual things, you are driven to seek it in vile and sensual things, because man cannot live without some gratification and recreation. He must seek it at the top of the tree or at the bottom.

To sum up, the evils and mischiefs that follow from sadness are so great that the Wise Man says: *All evils come with sadness* (Ecclus. xxv. 17). And again: *Death comes with sadness* (Ecclus. xxxviii. 19), even everlasting death, which is hell. So St. Augustine explains the saying of Jacob to his sons: *Ye will bring my grey hairs with sorrow to hell* (Gen. xlii. 38). He says that Jacob feared lest the sadness of the loss of his son Benjamin might make such an impression on him and do him so much harm as to put his salvation in danger and plunge him into the hell of the damned. For this reason, he says, St. Paul advises us to beware of sadness, lest perchance for excess of sadness we may come to shipwreck (II Cor. ii. 7). It is for the great mischiefs and dangers that follow from sadness, that Holy Writ and holy men so strongly advise and warn us to beware of it—not for your comfort and enjoyment, for if that were all it would matter little whether you were sad or cheerful. For the same reason the devil desires so much to see us sad and strives so much to make us so, because sadness is the root and cause of so many evils and sins.

CHAPTER II

In Which Are Given Sundry Reasons Why It Befits Us to Serve God Cheerfully

REJOICE in the Lord always, again I say unto you rejoice, says the Apostle St. Paul (Phil. iv. 4). The same is repeated many times in the Psalms of the Prophet David. *Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, ye just, and glory all ye right of heart* (Psalm xxxi. 11). *Let them leap for joy and be glad in thee, O Lord, all them that seek thee* (Psalm lxi. 5). *Sing ye to the Lord exultingly; all ye dwellers on the earth, serve the Lord in gladness, come with merry hearts into his presence* (Psalm xcix. 2). *Let their hearts be glad who seek the Lord* (Psalm civ. 3). And in many other places he exhorts us again and again to serve God cheerfully. And this was the greeting of the angel to Toby: *God give thee ever much joy and cheerfulness* (Tob. v. 11). The blessed St. Francis used to say: "To the devil and his members it belongs to be sad, but to us ever to rejoice in the Lord." *In the dwellings of the just there should ever be heard the cry of cheerfulness and salvation* (Psalm cxvii. 15). Has not the Lord brought us to His house and chosen us from among thousands? How, then, can we be sad?

To understand this to be a thing of great importance, it were enough to see how many times Holy Writ recommends and insists on it, and to see on the other hand the great losses that we sustain, as we have said, in consequence of sadness. But to make the case superabundantly clear, and that in the light of ocular evidence of the advantage thence ensuing, we will mention some reasons showing how proper it is to walk always in the service of God with this cheerfulness of heart. Let the first be the fact that the Lord so requires it. *God loveth a cheerful giver*, says St. Paul (II Cor. ix. 7), according to that saying of the Wise

Man: *All that thou givest, give with a cheerful countenance* (Ecclus. xxxv. 11). Here in the world we see that every master of a house looks to his servants to serve him cheerfully and is displeased when he sees them in the sulks and serving him with a bad grace and a downcast air; such service is not pleasing to him, but rather vexes him. So God our Lord takes delight in our serving Him with a hearty good will and cheerfulness, and not with gloom or sadness.

Holy Scripture notes that the people of Israel offered vast store of gold and silver and precious stones for the building of the Temple with hearty good will and cheerfulness (I Chron. xxix. 9-17); and King David rendered God thanks at seeing the people offer their gifts with so great joy. That is what God sets great store by. He does not reckon so much of the work done as of the will with which it is done. Even here among men we are wont to say, the will wherewith the deed is done goes for more than the deed itself; and we set great store by that will, even though the thing done be in itself small. And, contrariwise, however great the thing done, if there is no heart or cheerfulness in the doing of it, it calls forth neither our esteem nor our gratitude, but rather our displeasure. They say very well that to serve a good dish with nasty sauce renders the whole service disagreeable.

The second reason is that it redounds much to the glory and honor of God to serve Him cheerfully, for in that way the doer of the service shows that he does it with all his heart and thinks it all too little in comparison with what he desires to do. They who serve God in sadness seem to wish to convey the impression that they are doing a great deal and that they are ready to burst with the effort, that they can scarcely bear the burden for its being so great and heavy; and this attitude is thankless and offends. That was one of the reasons why the blessed St. Francis liked not to see sadness on the face of his friars, inasmuch as it

gives the impression of reluctance in the will and sloth in the body for doing good; whereas others, who go about the work cheerfully and gaily, seem to say that what they do is nothing in comparison with what they desire and would like to do. So St. Bernard says: "Lord, what I do for Thee is scarce the labor of an hour; and if it be more, for love I feel it not"—*Opus meum vix unius est horae; et si plus, prae amore non sentio*. This gives great satisfaction to the Lord. So He says in the Gospel: *When thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that men may not see thee fasting*; which means to say, put yourself in festal garb and look cheerful, that it may seem that you are not fasting or doing anything particular. *Be not as hypocrites* (Matt. vi. 16), who seek to let all know that they are fasting, and attract attention to their doing something out of the common. By the way, it may be well observed here that there are some who, to practise modesty and recollection, think it necessary to go about with heads down and a rueful countenance—and they are mistaken. Pope St. Leo says: "Religious modesty should never be sad, but saintly"—*non moesta, sed sancta*. A religious should ever wear an air of cheerful modesty and modest cheerfulness. And to know how to combine these two things is a great grace and ornament to a religious.

The third reason: Not only does it greatly redound to the honor of God, but also to the profit and edification of our neighbor, and stands surety for virtue. For they who serve God in this way persuade many men by their example that there is not that heaviness of heart and difficulty in the way of virtue which the wicked imagine, since they see them taking that way with all good humor and cheerfulness. Thereby men, who naturally love a cheerful and contented life, are greatly encouraged to give themselves to virtue. For this reason particularly it greatly behooves us to show a cheerful face in our ministries, since it is our business to have so much to do with our neighbor, our end and insti-

tute being to gain souls to God. In this way many are gained and brought over, not only to virtue, but to perfection and religious life. We know cases of persons having left the world and entered religion for seeing the cheerfulness and satisfaction in which religious live. What men desire is a happy life; and if they knew the happiness and contentment of a good religious, the world would be unpeopled and all would flock into religion; but this is a hidden manna, which God has hidden away and kept for those whom He has been pleased to choose. To you the Lord has discovered this hidden treasure, and has not discovered it to your brother; and so he stays where he is there outside, while God has brought you in here, for which you owe Him infinite thanks.

The fourth reason why it befits us to live in cheerfulness is because a work commonly is of greater merit and value when it is done with this cheerfulness and alacrity, which secures the work's being done in better style and greater perfection. Even in the world of philosophy Aristotle said: The cheerfulness and relish with which a work is done gets it done to perfection, while sadness spells bad work. So we see by experience the vast difference between what is done heartily and what is done reluctantly: in the latter the worker does not seem to care for anything beyond saying that he has done it; while in the former he takes pains to do well what he does, and tries to do it to the best of his power. Add to this what St. Chrysostom says, that cheerfulness and satisfaction of soul gives strength and sustenance to work. And so says the Prophet David: *I ran in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my heart* (Psalm cxviii. 32). Cheerfulness widens and dilates the heart; so the prophet says: Lord, when thou didst give me this cheerfulness wherewith my heart was enlarged, I ran with great activity in the way of thy commandments. Then labor is not felt: *They shall run, and not be fatigued; they shall walk and not faint* (Isaias xl. 31).

On the contrary, sadness narrows, compresses, and confines the heart; it not only takes away all desire of doing anything, but also takes away the strength to do it, and makes the doing of that tedious which before was done with facility. Thus the priest Aaron confessed his weakness when, God having slain his two sons at one blow, and then his brother Moses reprehending him for not having offered sacrifice to the Lord, he replied: *How could I please the Lord in sacrifice, with a mournful and sad soul?* (Levit. x. 19). And the children of Israel in their exile at Babylon said: *How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?* (Psalm cxxxvi. 4). And we see by daily experience that, when we are in sadness, not only our spiritual strength is diminished, according to that text of the Wise Man: *The spirit is cast down in grief of soul* (Prov. xv. 13), but our bodily strength also, every arm and every leg feeling as though it had a hundred-weight attached to it. For this reason saints advise us not to go sad under temptation, since sadness takes away the vigor of the will and makes a man cowardly and faint-hearted.

Another reason may be gathered from those already mentioned, showing how desirable it is for a servant of God, and especially a religious, to keep cheerful. It is that, when anyone is seen to go cheerfully about the business of religion and virtue, he gives great satisfaction and affords good hope that he will persevere and go on as he has begun; whereas, when we see anyone sad, he occasions surmises and fears about his perseverance. As when you see a man carrying uphill a great load of wood, treading heavily, puffing and groaning and stopping, and here one stick falls and there another, you say at once: "The load is too much for that man; I reckon he will have to drop it halfway;" but when you see another tripping lightly under his burden, singing cheerfully as he goes along, you say thereupon: "That man could carry even more than he has got." In the same way, when a man does the exercises of virtue and

religious life sadly and gloomily, sighing like a drudge under the burden, he gives you the idea that he cannot last; for to go ever rowing and forcing your way upstream is the life of a galley slave, a very violent thing and unnatural. But when one goes cheerfully about humble offices and other exercises of religion, as well corporal as spiritual, and does everything readily and nimbly, he gives good hope of going on and persevering.

CHAPTER III

That the Ordinary Faults into Which We Fall Should Not Be Enough to Make Us Abandon This Cheerfulness

THE saints set so much value on our keeping up our courage and cheerfulness that they say we should not be discouraged even over our falls, nor lose heart, nor go about sad and melancholy. Sin being one of the things for which we may reasonably be sad, as we shall say presently, nevertheless, says St. Paul, this sadness should be tempered and allayed by the hope of forgiveness and the mercy of God, so as not to cause discouragement and disheartenment, *lest perchance it happen that such a one be overwhelmed with excess of sadness* (II Cor. ii. 7). So the blessed St. Francis greatly disliked seeing any such sadness among his friars; and said to one of his companions who was looking sad: "A servant of God ought not to be sad except for having committed some sin; if you have committed one, repent and confess it, and beg God's pardon and mercy, praying with the prophet that he will restore to you your former joy" (Psalm l. 14). "Give me back, O Lord, that cheerfulness and alacrity that I felt in Thy service before I sinned, and sustain and strengthen me with the magnificent and powerful spirit of Thy grace." So St. Jerome explains this passage. Father Master Avila with much reason blames sundry persons who walk in the way of God

full of useless sadness, with hearts embittered, without taste for the things of God, disagreeable to themselves and disagreeable to their neighbors, out of heart and disconsolate. And many of them there are, he says, who do not commit mortal sins, but say that they behave in this manner for the venial sins they commit, and for not serving God as they ought and desire. This is a great mistake; for much greater are the losses which ensue upon this distress and unmeasured sadness than upon the fault itself; and when they might have cut the evil short by some exercise of prudence and decision, these people make it grow, and tumble from one pit into another. That is just what the devil wants to bring about by this sadness, to rob them of all energy and strength for work and not suffer them to succeed in doing anything well.

The lesson that we should learn from our faults and falls should be, in the first place, a sense of shame and humiliation, recognizing that we are weaker than we thought. Secondly, to beg more grace of the Lord, seeing that we need it. Thirdly, to live henceforth with greater care and caution, taking warning from what we have done once how to behave another time, anticipating occasions and removing them betimes. In this way we shall do more than by outbursts of discouragement and sadness. Father Master Avila says very well: "If for the ordinary faults that we commit we are to go crestfallen, sad, and disheartened, which of us men shall have rest or peace, seeing that we all sin?" Aim at serving God and doing what in you lies; and if you do not do all you might and fall into some faults, be not astonished at that nor discouraged, for so are we: you are a man, and not an angel; weak, and not confirmed in grace. God knows well our weakness and misery, and would not have us discouraged at that, but only that we should get up again promptly after a fall and beg more strength of the Lord, as the child that falls gets up at once and runs as before.

St. Ambrose says the falls of children do not make their father indignant, but arouse his tenderness. In this way, he says, God behaves with us, according to the saying of the prophet: *As a father hath compassion on his children because he knoweth the clay of which we are made; he remembereth that we are dust* (Psalm cii. 13-14). God knows well our weakness and misery, and loves us as His weak and feeble children; and so these falls and weaknesses of ours rather move Him to compassion than to indignation. One of the great comforts that we have, weak in the service of God as we are, is to understand that God is so rich in love and mercy as to bear with us and love us although we do not answer to His love so entirely as in reason we should. God is *rich in mercy* (Eph. ii. 4); His mercy surpasses our sins. As wax melts before a fire, so do our faults and sins vanish before the infinite mercy of God. This should greatly encourage us to live always in much content and cheerfulness, to understand that God loves us and wishes us well, and that for all these ordinary faults that we commit, we lose not one point of the sanctifying grace and love of God.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Roots and Causes of Sadness, and Its Remedies

BUT let us see the roots and causes whence sadness springs, that so we may apply the necessary remedies. Cassian and St. Bonaventure say that sadness may spring from many roots. Sometimes it springs from natural infirmity and a prevalence of melancholy humor in the body, in which case the remedy belongs rather to physicians than to theologians. But it is to be observed that the melancholy humor is engendered and increased by the melancholy thoughts the man entertains. So Cassian says that we should be no less careful to prevent these sad and mel-

ancholy thoughts' arising in us and carrying us away than we are in checking thoughts that come to us against chastity or against faith, for the great losses which, as we have said, may accrue to us thereby.

At other times, he says, without any particular cause going before provocative thereof, a man is apt to find himself of a sudden sad and melancholy, so as to have no enjoyment of anything, not even of friends and society which he used formerly to like, but everything vexes and offends him. He does not want to see or converse with anybody; and if he does converse and talk, it is not with that pleasantness and affability which he used to show, but dryly and peevishly. Hence we may gather, says Cassian, that our fits of impatience and harsh and disagreeable speeches do not always arise from occasion thereof given by our brethren, but from within. The cause is ourselves; our not keeping our passions under control is the root from which it all springs. Thus the means to keep peace is not by shunning intercourse and conversation with men—it is not that God commands us—but in the practice of patience and thorough mortification of our passions. If these are not mortified, wherever we go and whithersoever we fly, we carry with us the cause of our temptations and troubles.

The story is well known that SURIUS relates of a monk who by reason of his passionate temper and ill-restrained outbursts of anger was a burden to himself and others; and so determined to leave the monastery of the holy Abbot EUTHYMIUS, in which he lived, thinking that, when he was rid of all intercourse with others and lived by himself, his anger would cease for lack of occasion to excite it. He did so and, shutting himself up in a cell, took with him a jug of water; and by contrivance of the devil it was spilled. He went back to fill it with water again, and a second time it was spilled, falling to the ground. He went a third time to fill it and set it down carefully, and a third time it was spilled; and then, with more anger than usual, he seizes

the jug and flings it to the ground, where it is smashed to pieces. After doing that, he began to reckon the matter up, and came to see that it was not the company of the monks and communication with them that was at the root of his falling into fits of impatience and anger, but his own want of mortification; and so finally he returned to his monastery. Thus it is that the cause of your restlessness and impatience lies in yourself, and not in your brethren. Mortify your passions, and in that way, says Cassian, you will have peace even with wild beasts, according to that saying of Job: *The beasts of the field shall be tame to thee* (Job v. 23)—how much more your brothers!

At other times, says St. Bonaventure, sadness is apt to arise from some trouble befalling you, or from your not having gained some object of your desire. St. Gregory and St. Augustine and other saints also specify this cause, and say that the sadness of the world springs from a man's being attached to worldly things; for it is clear that he must be saddened who sees himself bereft of what he loves. But he who shall be loosened and detached from all things of the world, and put all his desire and contentment in God, will be free from the sadness of the world. Father Avila says very well: "There is no doubt but that grief comes of desire; and thus the more desire, the more grief; the less desire, the less grief; and where there is no desire, there is ease." Thus our desires are our executioners; they are the torturers that torment and throttle us.

Coming down now more to particulars, and applying things to ourselves, I say that oftentimes the cause of sadness in a religious is his not being indifferent to all that obedience may lay upon him: this is what is apt often to make him sad and melancholy, and go about with a gloomy and overcast countenance, asking himself: "What if they take this away from me, which I find to my liking? What if they order me this, for which I feel a repugnance?" By the mere fact of a man's desiring to have what he has not

or fearing to lose what he has, his life must be one of pain and uneasiness. But a religious who sets himself with indifference to anything that obedience shall enjoin him and has placed all his content and satisfaction in doing the will of God, is always satisfied and cheerful, and nothing can put him out of his contentment. The superior may move him from this office or from this college, but he cannot move him from the contentment that he has in this consideration; since he has placed it not in being here or there, or in holding this office or that, but in doing the will of God. And thus he carries his contentment with him wherever he be, and in any duty whatever that they put him to. If, then, you wish to be always cheerful and contented, put your contentment in doing the will of God in all things, and put it not in this or that, or in doing your own will, for that is no way to find content, but to come in for a thousand discontents and uneasinesses.

Further to declare the matter, that which is commonly the cause of our fits of melancholy and sadness is not the humor of melancholy, but the humor of pride reigning in our hearts. So long as this humor shall reign in your heart, make sure that fits of melancholy and sadness will never be lacking to you, because occasions will never be lacking, and thus you will live in perpetual pain and torment. To this we may reduce the case that we have just been speaking of, of a man's not being indifferent to anything and everything that obedience may command him; because very often it is not the labor or difficulty of the office that is proposed to us—because there will usually be greater labor and greater difficulties in the high offices and posts that we covet and desire—but it is pride and desire of honor that is at the bottom of the trouble. This it is that makes the laborious post seem easy, and the light and easy burdensome, so that the mere thought and fear of having such a thing put upon us is enough to plunge us into sadness and melancholy.

The remedy for this sadness clearly will be, to be humble and content with a lowly position. Such a one will be free from all these sadnesses and uneasinesses, and enjoy much peace and quiet. *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls* (Matt. xi. 29). So St. Augustine explains these words; he says that, if we imitate Christ in humility, we shall feel no labor nor difficulty in the practice of virtues, but much facility and sweetness. What makes the difficulty is self-love, self-will, and private judgment, desire of honor and esteem and amusement and comfort. Humility gets rid of and clears away all these obstacles, making a man think little of himself, deny his own will and judgment, and despise honors and reputation and all temporal goods and satisfactions. Once rid of all this, and you find no difficulty in the practice of virtue, but great peace and ease.

CHAPTER V

That Recourse to Prayer Is a Grand Means for Getting Rid of Sadness

CASSIAN says that for all sorts of sadness, by whatever way or from whatever source they come, an excellent method is to betake ourselves to prayer and think of God and the hope of the life everlasting that is promised us. Herewith all clouds are dissipated, and the sky lights up, and the spirit of sadness flies away, as the evil spirit fled from Saul and left him when David played on his harp and sang. And the Apostle St. James in his canonical epistle (v. 13) prescribes for us this remedy. *Is any of you sad? Let him pray.* And the Prophet David tells us that he practised it. "When I feel sad and disconsolate, the remedy that I use is to think of God, and with that I am comforted" —*Renuit consolari anima mea; memor fui Dei et consolatus sum* (Psalm lxxvi. 4). "The thought of Thee, O Lord, and

of Thy commandments and of Thy promises, is for me a song of joy; that it is that refreshes and comforts me in this land of exile and pilgrimage, in all my labors and distresses"—*Cantabiles mihi erant iustificationes tue in loco peregrinationis mee* (Psalm cxviii. 54). If here on earth conversation with a friend is enough to drive away melancholy and restore cheerfulness, what should it be to converse with God? So the servant of God and good religious should not take as a means to cast off his fits of melancholy and sadness talking and distraction and free play of the senses, nor the reading of vain and profane things, still less singing them, but having recourse to God and recollection in prayer—that should be his comfort and relaxation.

The saints draw attention to the story of Holy Writ, how forty days after the deluge Noah opened the window of the Ark and let out the raven to see if the earth was now dry enough for him to leave the ship, and the raven returned no more: hence the saying, "The raven's messenger." Thereupon he sent after it the dove, which, as Holy Writ says, *finding no resting place for her feet, returned to the ark* (Gen. viii. 9). The saints ask the question: Since the raven did not return, it is clear that he found resting place for his feet; how, then, does Holy Writ say that the dove found no resting place for her feet? The answer is that the raven settled upon the quagmires and upon the dead bodies; but the dove, simple, white, and fair creature, made not her food of dead bodies, nor her resting place of quagmires, and so returned to the Ark, finding elsewhere no resting place for her feet nor place of refreshment. So the true servant of God and good religious finds no satisfaction nor recreation in those dead things, those vain amusements of the world, and so returns like the dove to the ark of her heart, and all her recreation and consolation in all her labors and griefs is recourse to prayer, remembrance of God, a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, there to console herself with Christ, giving Him an account of her

troubles and saying to Him: "How could I be sad, O Lord, being in Thy house and company!"

On those words of the Royal Prophet: *Thou hast given joy to my heart* (Psalm iv. 7), St. Augustine says: "Joy is not to be sought in exterior things, but there within, in the secret chamber of the heart, where Christ our Redeemer says (Matt. vi. 6) that we should pray to the eternal Father"—*Non ergo foris quaerenda est laetitia, sed intus, in interiore homine ubi habitat Christus, in ipso corde, in illo cubiculo ubi orandum est.*

Sulpicius Severus relates of the blessed Bishop St. Martin that he found alleviation of his labors and wearinesses in prayer. As blacksmiths, to lighten their labor a little, are wont to give a few idle strokes on the anvil, so he prayed while he seemed to be taking recreation. Of another servant of God it is related that, being in his cell, laden with most grievous sadness and incredible affliction, wherewith God was pleased at times to try him, he heard a voice from heaven in the interior of his soul saying to him: "What dost thou here, throwing thyself away in idleness? Rise and set to work, reflecting on My Passion." He rose at once and set himself to diligent meditation on the mysteries of the Passion of Christ, and at once the sadness left him and he was consoled and encouraged; and, continuing this reflection, he never again felt the like temptation.

CHAPTER VI

Of Another Very Ordinary Root of Sadness, Which Is the Not Going on As We Should Do in the Service of God; and of the Great Cheerfulness That Comes of a Good Conscience

ONE of the chief causes and origins of fits of sadness and melancholy not uncommonly is a man's not dealing straight with God, and not doing what he ought according

to his state and profession. We see by experience, and everyone has the experience within himself, that, when we live in fervor and care for our spiritual advancement, we live such cheerful and happy lives as to overflow with delight; and on the other hand, when we are not doing as we ought, we are sad and disconsolate. *A wicked heart shall yield sadness, a wicked heart shall be weighed down with griefs*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. iii. 29; xxxvi. 22). It is the property and natural working of evil and sin to cause sadness and grief in the soul. This property of sin God announced to Cain when he sinned; for as soon as he began to envy his brother Abel, Holy Writ says: *Cain became exceeding angry, and his face fell* (Gen. iv. 5). He carried within him such anger and inward rage that it made him go quite gloomy and crestfallen, showing plainly in his countenance the bitterness and inward sadness of his soul. And God asked him: *What is the reason that thou walkest thus troubled, sad and crestfallen?* And as Cain gave no answer, God answered for him, that this is the natural result of sin, saying: *Dost thou not well know, that if thou dost right, thou shalt reap satisfaction and joy?* And so another reading has it: *If thou dost right, thou shalt lift up thy face*, that is, be cheerful: *But if thou dost ill, thy sin shall at once be at thy gate, knocking to come in to torment thee* (Gen. iv. 7). And at once also it shall appear in thee externally by the cast of thy countenance. As virtue, because it is according to reason, naturally causes great cheerfulness in the heart, so vice and sin naturally cause great sadness, the man fighting against himself and against the natural dictate of his reason, and upon that the worm of conscience is there within him, gnawing and preying upon his vitals and making him cry out.

St. Bernard says: "There is no punishment greater or more severe than a bad conscience. For, though other people see not your faults and know them not, it is enough that you know them: there is the witness that is ever accus-

ing and tormenting you; you cannot hide yourself nor escape from yourself." Whatever you do and whatever amusements and recreations you seek, you cannot get rid of the remorse and outcries of your conscience. So that philosopher [Seneca] said that the greatest punishment that can be awarded to a fault is the having committed it, for the great torment wherewith a man's own conscience is tormented when he does wrong. Plutarch compares this pain to the heat and cold of a fever. He says that, as sick people receive more pain from the shivering and burning that comes of their illness than healthy persons in ordinary life do from the cold and heat that is due to the weather, so the accesses of sadness and melancholy that come of our own faults and the consequent remorse of our conscience cause much greater pain and torment than what comes of accidental mishaps and disasters, but without fault of ours. And this particularly holds good of one who has already begun to taste the sweetness of God and led a good life for some time in fervor and diligence, and afterwards comes to fall away and lead a tepid life; for to fall into poverty after having been rich is a sadder and more distressing existence than that of those who never have known what riches were. When you remember how in bygone days you led a devout life and were careful to serve God, and the favors that the Lord then did you, and now you see yourself fallen off from all that, it is inevitable that acute feelings must be aroused and smite the heart.

If, then, you wish to banish sadness from you and live ever happy and cheerful, the way is to live well and do your duty according to your state of life. So says St. Bernard: "Would you never be sad? Live well"—*Vis nunquam esse tristis? Bene vive*. Enter into yourself and give up the faults that are the cause of this sadness, and so it will cease and cheerfulness will come instead. "A good life is always accompanied with joy and cheerfulness, and a bad life with pain and torment"—*Bona vita semper gaudium*

habet, conscientia rea semper in poena est (St. Bernard). As there is no greater pain and torment than the remorse and outcries of a bad conscience, so there is no greater satisfaction and joy in this life than the testimony of a good conscience. *There is no delight to surpass joy of heart*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxx. 16). *A mind void of care is as a continual feast* (Prov. xv. 15). As a guest at a banquet is delighted with the variety of dishes and the presence of his fellow guests, so the servant of God who does his duty is delighted with the testimony of a good conscience and with the sweet perfume of the presence of God, of which he has great assurances and conjectures in his soul, according to that saying of St. John: *If our heart reprehendeth us not, we may approach God with confidence* (I John iii. 21). And the Apostle St. Paul says that a good conscience is a paradise and a glory and a bliss upon earth. *This is our glory, the testimony of our conscience* (II Cor. i. 12). St. Chrysostom says that a good conscience, arising from a good life, drives away and scatters all darkness and bitterness of heart as the sun at his rising drives away and scatters all dark clouds. So is all sorrow, falling on a good conscience, extinguished as a spark of fire falling on a deep lake. St. Augustine adds that, as honey is not only sweet itself, but sweetens even disagreeable things with which it is mixed, so a good conscience is not only joyous and pleasant in itself, but yields joy in the midst of afflictions and renders them sweet and palatable, according to the saying of the prophet: *The judgments of God, which are His holy commandments and the fulfilment of His law, are sweeter than the honeycomb* (Psalm xviii. 10-11). Not only is the service of God sweet in itself, but further it sweetens all the afflictions and troubles of this life.

We read in Church histories that the persecutors of the faith did quite a new thing, of which there was no memory of its ever being done in past times. It was that all those who, on their being called up and put to torture, had denied

the faith, they put in prison along with the holy martyrs. And that their punishment might be without comfort, they were no longer accused as Christians, but as murderers and malefactors. Thereupon was noticed the difference between the one set of prisoners and the other in mien and countenance. The saints came into court and to torture rejoicing, with an indescribable look of God in their faces; their fetters adorned them like collars of pearls, and from the filth of their prison they come out breathing a sweet odor to Christ and His angels and to themselves, as if they had not been in prisons but in pleasure grounds. The others came out sad, with heads down, horrible to look at and hideous beyond all foulness. To the one their own conscience was a vexation and a torment ruder than the irons and chains and stench of the prison; to the others their good conscience and the hope of rest and glory was an alleviation of their pains and a refreshment. This is the ordinary experience of good men. So great is the joy of a good conscience that often, when a good man finds himself in sorrow and affliction, and, turning his eyes in all directions, sees nothing to give him comfort, then when he turns them within and sees the peace of his conscience and the testimony that it bears him, he finds consolation and strength, because he knows that all the rest, come what may, neither makes nor mars his main interest, but only that.

Hence follows something that is very consoling; for if a good conscience, standing well with God, is a cause of cheerfulness, so also such spiritual cheerfulness will be a great sign and indication of a man's having a good conscience and standing well with God, and being in His grace and friendship, for the cause is known by the effect. And so St. Bonaventure observes: "Spiritual joy is a great sign of the indwelling of God in a soul that is in His grace and love." *Light is risen for the just, and joy for the right of heart* (Psalm xcvi. 12), while darkness, gloom, and sadness are for the wicked. *The wicked walk in darkness* (Psalm

lxxx. 5). *Their ways are full of wreckage and misfortune, but the way of peace they have not known* (Psalm xiii. 3). Thus one of the chief reasons why the blessed St. Francis desired to see this spiritual joy in his religious was that it was a sign of the indwelling of God in them, and that they were in His grace and friendship. *The fruit of the Spirit is joy*, says St. Paul (Gal. v. 22). This spiritual joy, which rises and springs as from a fountain from cleanness of heart and purity of life, is a fruit of the Holy Ghost, and so is a sign of His indwelling there. And so much did St. Francis rejoice at seeing this cheerfulness in his religious that he used to say: "If at any time the devil tempts me with heaviness of heart and sadness, I set myself to look and consider the cheerfulness of my friars and companions, and at once I am freed from the temptation at the sight as if I had seen angels." To see the joy of the servants of God, who are in His grace and friendship, is like seeing angels on earth, according to that word of Scripture: *I have seen thee looking as an angel of God* (Esther xv. 16). *Thou art goodly in mine eyes as an angel of God* (I Kings xxix. 9).

CHAPTER VII

That There Is Such a Thing as Good and Holy Sadness

BUT someone will say: Are we always to be cheerful? Never to be sad? Is there any sadness that is good? To this St. Basil answers that there is a sadness that is very good and profitable; for one of the eight beatitudes which Christ our Lord lays down in the Gospel is: *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted* (Matt. v. 5). St. Basil says, and St. Leo Pope, and Cassian also mentions it, that there are two sorts of sadness. One is worldly, when one is sad for something of this world, its adversities and troubles; and that sadness they say the servants

of God ought not to have. In the Lives of the Fathers we read of St. Apollonius that he used to preach to his disciples that sadness does not become the servants of God, who have their heart set upon the hope of the kingdom of heaven. Let the Gentiles be sad, he said, and the Jews, and the rest of unbelievers; let sinners too weep unceasingly; but as for the just, who hope with lively faith for the enjoyment of everlasting goods, let them be glad and rejoice. For if they who love perishable and earthly things rejoice and are glad at good success in attaining them, how much more reason have we to be glad and rejoice in God and in the everlasting glory that we hope for! And so the Apostle would not have us give way to unmeasured sadness even for the deaths of our friends and relations. *We would not have you, brethren, be ignorant as regards the dead, that ye mourn not like other men who have no hope* (I Thess. iv. 12). He does not say absolutely that we should not mourn, for to show some sentiment of emotion on that account is natural, and not a bad but a good thing, and a sign of love. Christ our Lord showed this emotion, and wept at the death of His friend Lazarus, and the bystanders said, *See how He loved him* (John xi. 36). But what St. Paul means is that we should not mourn like unbelievers, who have no hope of another life, but moderate our sorrow with the comforting thought that soon we shall see them all united with God in heaven; that this one goes before, and we presently shall follow after him. Though, being men, we cannot omit to make use of the things of the present life, yet we must not dwell much on them, but take them on the way. *Let them that weep, says the Apostle, be as though they wept not and them that rejoice as though they rejoiced not* (I Cor. vii. 30).

Another sadness there is that is spiritual and according to God, good and profitable, and becoming the servants of God. This, St. Basil and Cassian say, is engendered in four ways, and of four things. First, of the sins that we have

committed against God, according to that saying of the Apostle: *I rejoyce, not that ye have been sad, but that your sadness hath led you to repentance. Ye have been saddened according to God. The sadness that is according to God worketh repentance leading to salvation* (II Cor. vii. 9-10). An excellent sadness it is, and well according to God, for a man to bewail his sins and be sad and grieved for having offended God. St. Chrysostom gives a reason worthy of his genius. There is no loss in this world that is repaired by sorrowing, grieving, and making oneself sad over it, only the loss that comes of sin; thus in all other matters sorrowing and grieving is time thrown away, but not in this. In the case of all other losses, not only is there no remedy in bewailing and being sorry for them, but they are rather augmented and increased thereby; but the loss entailed by sin is remedied by sorrow and grief, and therefore we should bewail it.

Secondly, this sorrow is engendered and springs from the sight of the sins of others, seeing how God is offended and made light of and His law broken. This also is an excellent sorrow, taking its rise from love and zeal for the honor and glory of God and the good of souls. Thus we see those holy prophets and great friends of God worn out and consumed with this sorrow and grief at seeing the sins and offenses committed against His Majesty, evils which they are unable to remedy. *Fainting shall come over me by reason of sinners abandoning thy law* (Psalm cxviii. 53). So great was the affliction that the Prophet David felt on this account, that the grief of his soul enfeebled his body and made his blood run cold. *My zeal hath consumed me for mine enemies forgetting thy words. I saw their transgressions, and wasted away at the sight of their not keeping thy words* (Psalm cxviii. 139, 158). The blood ran cold in my body; I shuddered to see the injuries and offenses committed against God. The Prophet Jeremy is full of similar complaints and sighs. This sadness is very good for us

and very much becomes us, because the purpose of our institute is that the name of God be hallowed and glorified all the world over; and so the greater should be our sorrow to see that this is not done accordingly, but quite the reverse.

Thirdly, this sadness may spring from a desire of perfection, which means being so anxious to advance in perfection as to be ever sighing and groaning that we are not better and more perfect, according to what Christ says in the Gospel: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after virtue and perfection, for they shall have their fill* (Matt. v. 6); God will fulfil their desires.

Fourthly, there may spring up in the servants of God a holy sadness at the contemplation of the glory of heaven and desire of heavenly goods, seeing themselves in exile away from them and put off, as the children of Israel bewailed their exile in Babylon when they remembered the Land of Promise (Psalm cxxxvi. 1), and the prophet lamented his exile in this life: *Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged* (Psalm cxix. 5). Those verses of the "Salve": "To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve, groaning and weeping in this vale of tears," are sighs that make sweet and pleasant music in the ears of God.

Cassian specifies the signs by which we may know what sadness is good and according to God and what is evil and of the devil. He says that the former is obedient, affable, meek, gentle, and patient; in short, as springing from the love of God, it contains in itself all the fruits of the Holy Ghost, which St. Paul enumerates, which are *charity, joy, peace, longanimity, goodness, faith, meekness, continence* (Gal. v. 22). But the evil sadness that is of the devil is rude, impatient, full of rancor and fruitless bitterness, inclining to diffidence and despair, and withdrawing and removing from all good. Moreover, this evil sadness carries with it no consolation or joy; but the sadness that is of God, says Cassian, is in a certain manner joyful, and

carries with it a certain consolation and comfort, and greatly fosters all that is good, as may be seen by running through the four sorts of sadness that we have mentioned. The very bewailing of one's sins, though on the one hand it breathes affliction and pain, is on the other exceedingly consoling. We see by experience how content and satisfied we remain when we have been heartily bewailing our sins.

One of the things that go a long way to show the great difference for the better there is between the spiritual life of the servants of God and the life of worldly people is this, that we feel greater joy and delight in our soul when we have just done weeping for our sins than worldly people feel in all the feasts and pleasures of the world. St. Augustine makes good reflection on this point. He says: If this, which is the first of the true works of one who is beginning to serve God—if this weeping of the just, if their sadness, gives them such satisfaction, what must be the joy and contentment which they will feel when the Lord consoles them in prayer and allows them some of those spiritual transports which He is wont to impart to His elect! What must it be when He altogether dries their eyes and wipes away their tears! *God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor pain shall be any more, for the things that were of old have passed away* (Apoc. xxi. 4). See, then, the life of one who has continually made of himself a Jeremias, lamenting other people's sins, what sweetness and satisfaction it raises in the soul, since it is a sign of good sons to be very jealous of the honor of their father! See, then, the life that has been spent in panting and sighing after perfection, and desires of being already in our heavenly country—what could there be sweeter and more delicious! St. Augustine says: "What more delightful state of mind than to be ever sighing after that glory and blessedness which we hope for, and to have our heart ever there where is true joy and satisfaction!"

Hence also it will be seen that the cheerfulness which we look for in the servants of God is no vain mirth of laughter and idle words, nor of witticisms and jokes, and chattering with everybody that one comes across; that would not be the cheerfulness proper to the servants of God, but distraction, foolish liberty, and dissipation. What we look for is an outward cheerfulness redounding from that which is within, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *A joyful heart makes a cheerful face* (Prov. xv. 13). As sadness of spirit redounds upon the body, drying it up and consuming it, even to the very flesh and bones—*a sad spirit drieth up the bones* (Prov. xii. 25)—so inward cheerfulness of heart redounds also upon the body and is shown in the countenance. So we read of many saints that there appeared in their face a cheerfulness and serenity which bore witness to the cheerfulness and inward peace of their soul. That is the cheerfulness that we want.

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ON OUR TREASURES IN JESUS CHRIST



CHAPTER I

Of the Treasures and Great Blessings That We Have in Christ

BUT when the fulness of time was come, God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Gal. iv. 4-5). When the fulness of time was come, says the Apostle St. Paul. All other times were, so to speak, void of grace; this time is full of it and of spiritual gifts, and therefore with good reason it is called *the law of grace*, since in it there is given us that grace which is the fountain, source, and springhead of all graces. God sent His only-begotten Son made man to deliver us from sin, to redeem and rescue us from the power and servitude of the devil in which we were, to reconcile us to God, to make us His adopted sons, to open to us the gate of heaven which sin was keeping shut.

After the sad fall of our first parents, whereby they lost for themselves and for us the happy state of original justice in which God had created them, and became subject, they and all their descendants, to infinite miseries, one consolation remained to them in the midst of so many woes—it was that, immediately after Adam had sinned, God cursed the serpent and promised to give at a certain time His only-begotten Son to be made man and suffer for us, and deliver us from the evils into which we had fallen by sin. *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between her seed and thy seed, she shall crush thy head* (Gen. iii. 15). This promise consoled them much, and thereupon they did penance, and taught their children the story of the happy state they had held and how they had lost it by sin; but that there should come a Redeemer in Whose virtue they were to be saved. This promise God confirmed many times, especially to certain men who pleased Him most particu-

larly, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, promising them that of their race the Redeemer should be born. The whole religious body of Jews professed this, and the prophets spoke marvels of His coming. They waited for it with cries, groans, and prayers. *Oh, that thou wouldst break through the heavens and come down!* (Isaias lxiv. 1). *Drop down your dew, ye heavens, and let the clouds rain the Just; let earth open and bud forth a Savior* (Isaias xlv. 8). The spouse in the Canticles desired it, saying: *Oh, that thou wouldst come forth hither, being made my brother, at the breasts of my mother, that there I might kiss thee and embrace thee, and henceforth none might despise me* (Cant. viii. 1), seeing that I have God for my brother. This was all the hope of the Gentiles: *He shall be the expectation of the Gentiles* (Gen. xlix. 10). They awaited Him as captives await their delivery, and this hope sustained them, and in virtue of Him that was to come their sins were forgiven them. As we believe that He has come, so they believed that He was to come; and so they called Him, *He that is to come*. That was the question they put to St. John the Baptist: *Art thou he that is to come, or look we for another?* (Matt. xi. 3).

But when there came the fulness of time, when the hour had arrived in which God had determined to show this great mercy to the world, He sent His only-begotten Son. He would not send Him at once, that men might better recognize His mercy and desire their cure, and esteem it the more when it was given them. Oftentimes God will not give the remedy or the comfort desired at once, that we may come to see our poverty and the need we are under of having recourse to Him, and not attribute anything to ourselves. There came at last the hour, so precious and so desired, when God had determined to apply a remedy to our fall. This fall and consequent loss none could repair worthily and duly but God Himself. The forces of man were not enough for him to lift himself up; the forces of angels were

not enough to lift him up; there was need of the strength and power of God. And whereas the redemption had to be wrought out by satisfaction made for the fault, and that a painful satisfaction, and God in His substance and nature could not suffer, His infinite wisdom discovered this means and marvelous invention of the Son of God making Himself man and uniting in one and the same person both natures, divine and human; so was wrought out this portentous transaction of the redemption of mankind. It was an invention full of wisdom and goodness, a manifestation of the infinite greatness and power of God, transcending all the other works that He had done in the world. So the prophet implores: *Rouse, O Lord, thy power*, manifest Thine omnipotence, *and come to save us* (Psalm lxxix. 3). He implores Him to show His power in this coming, because it was a work of the greatest stretch of power that God could put forth in this world. So says St. Augustine: The creation of the world was a great work; the creation of so many perfect creatures was a sign of God's power; and so the Church sings: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; but compared with the redemption of the world, that work was as zero. So David calls creation the work of the fingers of God: *I contemplate thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast created* (Psalm viii. 4); but when there is question of the redemption of the human race, it is called the work of His arm. *He hath put forth might in his arm* (Luke i. 51). The difference between arm and finger is the difference of the one work from the other

Not only was this work a manifestation of the power and greatness of God, but also of the greatness of man and the value that God sets upon him, much more than the work of creation. So says the Church: "O God, Who hast wonderfully created the dignity of human nature, and still more wonderfully restored it." God did a great deal for man when He created him, but much more when He redeemed

him. Pope St. Leo says: "God raised man to a high degree of being when He created Him to His image and likeness; but He raised and ennobled him far more by making Himself, God as He was, not merely in the image and likeness of man, but true man." So many and so great are the benefits that have accrued to us from God's having made Himself man for our redemption, that in exchange for them we ought to take Adam's fault for a blessing to the world. So the Church on Holy Saturday, rapt in spirit in a transport of love, entertaining and delighting herself in Christ her Spouse, sings: "O happy evil, by which so great good has come to men! O happy infirmity, that has been cured by such a medicine!" More has been given to us by Christ than has been taken away from us by Adam. Greater is the gain of the redemption than the loss of the fall. *Not as was the offense hath been the gift*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. v. 15), considering that the grace which Christ has imparted to the world is greater than the loss caused to it by the sin of Adam. And St. Bernard, alleging this testimony of St. Paul, says: "Much mischief did one man and one woman do to us; but infinite thanks be given to God for that by means of another man and another woman, Christ and the Virgin, not only has that mischief been repaired, but repaired to great advantage, since the greatness of the benefit and the gift given us infinitely exceeds the harm done us."

It is impossible to enumerate or say the great benefits and treasures that we have in Christ. The Apostle St. Paul says that the Lord had given him this grace of preaching and declaring to the Gentiles these inestimable riches and treasures (Eph. iii. 8). This grace we needed just now. Christ Himself said to the Samaritan woman: *O woman, if thou didst know the gift of God!* (John iv. 10), the blessing that He has given to the world. This so signal gift that He promised to give in this His Son, He has now given. This gift well deserves the name of gift, since in it are con-

tained all the gifts of God. *With him He hath given us all things* (Rom. viii. 2). Oh, if we knew and understood this gift and the great blessings that we have therein! Oh, if the Lord would open to us this vein and discover to us this mine, this so excellent treasure! How rich we should become! How happy should we be! God had done this favor to St. Augustine, and so he said: "Lord, he who will not serve Thee for the benefit of creation well deserves hell, but a new hell should be prepared for him who will not serve Thee for that of redemption."

It is told of Father Master Avila that he was so full of this thought that, when anyone wondered at any favor that the Lord had done him, he used to say: "Do not wonder at that, but wonder and be amazed that God has so loved you as to become man for your sake." *God hath so loved the world as to give his only-begotten Son* (John ii. 16). The Apostle and Evangelist St. John knew not how to utter or set forth the height of the degree of love that God has shown us otherwise than by taking the height of the love as being in proportion to the gift. By the sovereign excellence of the gift that He has given us, you will see the love that He bore us. The love was as great as the gift was great; now God has loved the world so much as to give His only-begotten Son to be made man, that by His death we might live. "O marvelous love," sings the Church; "O inestimable charity, that Thou didst give up Thine only-begotten Son to redeem a slave!" Who could imagine such a thing! What captive among the Moors in Barbary would dare to petition his king: "Sire, send hither thy only son to come to die among these infidels to ransom me"? But what you would not dare to open your mouth on, what you could not think or imagine, what could never enter your mind, that God has done for you.

Furthermore, not only has He delivered us from the captivity in which we lay, but He has raised us to the dignity of sons of God. He has taken our nature to make us par-

takers of His; God has become man to make us sons of God. *See what love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called and be sons of God*, says St. John (I John iii. 1; Gal. iv. 5). See the charity and bounty of the Lord and the great favor that He has done us, in that we not only call ourselves sons of God, but in reality are so; with truth we call God *Father*, and Jesus Christ His Son *Brother*. Thus He does not disdain, St. Paul says (Heb. ii. 11), to hold us for His brethren and call us so, but it looks as though He prided Himself on it. Many times does He use this term, and openly call us His brethren (John xx. 17). But whoever has God for Father, and Jesus Christ for Brother, in Whose hands is *all power in heaven and on earth* (Matt. xxviii. 18), what more is there for him to desire? When the brethren of Joseph saw their brother enthroned in Egypt, and having command over all the land, and that Pharaoh dispatched all affairs through him, and Joseph had removed the fear they felt for the offense they had given him, how joyful, how contented, how confident they were! *Come with me, and I will give you all the good things of Egypt* (Gen. xlv. 18). Now that is what Christ our Redeemer does for us, seeing that He is our Brother and loves us more than Joseph did his brethren; He wishes to take us all with Him. He says by St. John (xvii. 24): *Father, them that thou hast given me, I would that where I am, they also should be with me*. He gives us chariots to go there, in the many sacraments and gratuitous bounties that we have given us for that end.

And if they put before you the offenses and sins that you have committed against Him, to fill you with distrust and discouragement, by this time He has forgotten them for the penance you have done. And not only that, but He Himself is our advocate and intercessor with His eternal Father, to obtain for us mercy and pardon. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John encourages us with this reflection. *My children, sin not; but if anyone hath sinned, let him not*

lose confidence, since we have for advocate before the Father, Jesus Christ his Son (I John ii. 1). And the Apostle St. Paul says that Christ has ascended to heaven to do the office of advocate and agent on our behalf in the court of the Father (Heb. ix. 24). St. Bernard says that He is there in heaven showing and presenting to the eternal Father His wounds, saying that it is for us that He received them and at His command, and begging Him not to let that be lost which has cost Him so dear. As the most holy Queen of Angels shows her ever-blessed Son the breasts which gave Him suck, interceding for us; so the Son shows the eternal Father the wounds and blows that He received for us. And the saints say that that was one of the reasons why He would have it that the marks and openings of those wounds should remain after His glorious Resurrection.

When Jacob died, Holy Writ says that his sons were afraid of their brother Joseph, lest he might then take occasion to avenge upon them the injuries for which he had taken no vengeance in the lifetime of his father. And they said to him: "Our father at the hour of his death desired no greater good for his children than that their brother would pardon them, and forget past wrongs: *we also pray thee to forgive this iniquity to the servant of God thy father*" (Gen. l. 17). It is much to be observed that it was not their father who had done those wrongs, but his paternal love made the errors of his sons his own. So Christ our Redeemer, for the great love He bears us, makes our errors and sins His own, charging Himself with them and becoming our surety. *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all: the iniquities of us all he shall bear*, says Isaias (liii. 6, 11). Let us, then, go with this same embassy and petition to the eternal Father, and say: "Eternal Father, pardon these my sins to Thy Son Jesus Christ, Who left nothing more earnestly commended than this in the hour of His death: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*" (Luke xxiii. 34). Under this plea who can doubt of being pardoned?

Ye have drawn nigh to the sprinkling of the blood that speaketh better than that of Abel, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. xii. 24). Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but the blood of Christ cries for mercy upon those for whom it was shed and even those very persons who shed it. When, then, the devil shall put before you the multitude of your sins and miseries to make you lose heart and despair, fix your eyes on Jesus Christ; imagine that He takes you therewith by the hand and presents you to His Father and answers and pleads for you as your advocate and agent; that He covers your confusion and shame with the merits and services that He has rendered to His Father, and thereby you shall take heart again and your discouragement shall be exchanged for hope and your sorrow for joy, since He is *our justice, sanctification, and redemption*, as the Apostle says (I Cor. i. 30).

St. Ambrose says: "We have all things in Christ, and Christ is all things to us—*Omnia habemus in Christo, et omnia Christus est nobis*. If you desire to be cured of your wounds, He is a physician; if you are in a burning fever, He is a fountain; if you are wearied under the burden of sin, He is righteousness; if you are in need of assistance, He is strength; if you fear death, He is life; if you desire heaven, He is the way thither; if you wish to avoid darkness, He is light; if you are in need of food, He is sustenance. All that you can desire and have need of, you will find in Him." And in another place he says: "If the wolf comes out against you, take the stone, which is Christ. If you have recourse to Him, the wolf will fly and not be able to frighten you, much less harm you. St. Peter had recourse to this stone when he began to be afraid in the midst of the waves, and at once he found what he sought, for Christ took him by the hand and delivered him from the danger." St. Jerome on that passage of St. Paul: *Brethren, henceforth be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might; and put ye on the armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand the*

snares and temptations of the devil (Eph. vi. 10), says that from what follows and from the whole tenor of Holy Scripture, speaking of Christ our Redeemer, we gather clearly that the whole armor of God which the Apostle here bids us put on, is Christ our Redeemer. Thus it is the same thing to say, *Put ye on the armor of God*, and to say, *Put ye on Jesus Christ*. And he goes on to prove how Christ is our breastplate and our helmet, our coat of mail and our shield, and our two-edged sword, and all the rest. Thus the armor that we have to put on and arm ourselves withal in order to resist all the temptations of the devil, and defend ourselves against all his deceits and ambushes, and come out victorious, is the power of Christ. Christ is all things to us, and we have all things in Him.

For the better understanding of this, Holy Scripture attributes to Him innumerable names and titles—King, Master, Shepherd, Priest, Friend, Father, Brother, Spouse, Light, Life, Fountain, and the like. And as the Apostle says that *in Him are locked up all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Father* (Col. ii. 3), so also in Him are locked up all our treasures and riches, since in Him is the warrant for all our good and remedy for all our ills. As for all our good works, if they have any merit, it is on His account. Their value comes of their being dyed in His blood, as was told to St. John in the Apocalypse, of that so great multitude which he saw standing before the throne of God, a multitude that no man could number, clothed in white and shining robes and with palms in their hands. *These are they that have washed their robes, and have dyed them white in the blood of the Lamb* (Apoc. vii. 14). All our good things are, as it were, scraps and fragments of the riches of Christ; all the boons and blessings that come to us come through His merits; by Him we are delivered from all temptations and dangers; by Him we gain all virtues: in short, we have all things in Christ, we should gain all for Christ, and we should attribute all to

Christ. So the Church terminates and concludes all her prayers and petitions by saying, *per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*, in accordance with that text of the prophet: *Look down, O God our Protector, and cast thine eyes upon the face of thy Christ* (Psalm lxxxiii. 10); pardon our sins for the love Thou bearest Him, since He has died for them on a cross; cast Thine eyes on the wounds that He has suffered for us, and have mercy on us.

If the services of Abraham, Jacob, and David were enough in the estimation of God to appease Him and hold His hand, so as to prevent Him from punishing His people—and not only that, but to make Him confer many favors and blessings on His people for their sakes, as we see that the Lord said repeatedly, *for the sake of David my servant* (Isaias xlv. 4; IV Kings xix. 34)—how much more will the eternal Father not do for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son, *in whom He is so well pleased* (Matt. xvii. 5). So says the Apostle St. Paul: *He hath given us grace in his beloved Son* (Eph. i. 6). And Christ Himself says and assures us that anything whatsoever that we ask the Father in His name shall be done, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. *Whatsoever ye ask the Father in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (John xiv. 13).

Oh, what good reason had the angel to say to the shepherds on the night that the Lord was born, and in them to us: *Lo, I bring you tidings of great joy, for this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord* (Luke ii. 10-11). This is not one joy, but many joys and many good things. Isaias says in the singular, *of him that bringeth tidings of good* (Isaias lii. 7); while St. Paul quotes the passage in the plural, *of them that bring tidings of good things* (Rom. x. 15). Origen asks the reason of this difference, and says it is because Jesus Christ is not only one good thing, but all good things. He is our salvation, our life, our resurrection, light of the world, truth, way, gate of heaven, wisdom, power, and treasury of all good things;

for us He was born and died, that we might live; for us He rose again, that we might rise again; for us He ascended into heaven—I go to prepare you a place, and it is expedient for you that I go (John xiv. 2; xvi. 7). From thence He sent us the Holy Ghost; and there He is at the right hand of the Father, doing us continual favors and benefits. St. Cyprian says that He left open the openings of His wounds, to show that they remained as channels and fountains, streaming with treasures and graces, and so they go on streaming forever with the utmost liberality, and never can run dry. He has hands of gold, full of precious stones (Cant. v. 14); and as He is generous to a degree, His gifts find their way out by those openings. Conclude we, then, with the conclusion that St. Paul draws: *Having, then, a high priest and mediator so great as Jesus Christ, Son of God, who hath penetrated the heavens*, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and is equal to Him, *let us go with great confidence to the throne of His grace, that we may gain mercy and favor in all our needs* (Heb. iv. 14, 16).

Of the blessed St. Bernard we read in the story of his life that, in a severe illness which he had, he was transported out of himself, and being in a kind of ecstasy he thought they carried him before the tribunal of God, and that there the devil accused him and laid his charges against him, saying that he deserved not the glory of heaven. The saint answered: "I confess that I am not worthy of eternal glory, but my Lord Jesus Christ is worthy of it, and possesses heaven on two titles: the one, because He is the only-begotten Son of God and heir to the heavenly kingdom; the other, because He has bought it with His blood, by His obedience to His Father even unto death. He is content with the former of these two titles, and that by itself is sufficient for Him. He makes a present of the latter to me, and in virtue of that I hold my right to heaven; on that I take my stand and am confident." Whereupon the malicious accuser stood abashed,

the apparatus of judge and tribunal disappeared, and the saint returned to himself. In this, then, we should place our confidence; this should be all our hope. Jacob, clad in the garments of his elder brother, gained the blessing of his father. Let us clothe ourselves in Jesus Christ, our elder Brother; let us cover ourselves with the fell of this immaculate Lamb; let us avail ourselves of His merits and Passion, and in that way we shall gain the blessing of the eternal Father.

CHAPTER II

How Profitable and Pleasing to God Is Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer

THE blessed St. Augustine says: "There is nothing so wholesome and profitable for us as the daily thought and consideration of what the Son of God has suffered on our account." And St. Bernard: "There is nothing so efficacious for the healing of the wounds of our conscience and the purification and perfection of our soul as frequent and continued meditation on the wounds of Christ and on His death and Passion." For all temptations, and especially for those against purity, the saints say that the remedy of remedies is to have recourse to the thought of the Passion of Christ, and hide ourselves in His wounds. In short, we shall find in the Passion of Christ a universal remedy and aid. St. Augustine says: "In all circumstances I have found no remedy so efficacious as this." And St. Bonaventure: "He who exercises himself devoutly on the most holy life and Passion of the Lord will find there abundantly all that he requires and have no need to seek anything beyond Jesus." So we see that the saints and servants of God have practised this exercise continually, and have thereby arrived at great holiness and perfection.

Though there were nothing else in this exercise beyond merely remembering God and calling to mind the benefits that we have received at His hand, it would be a thing very precious and valuable in the eyes of the Lord. It is the way of love to make the lover desire and set great store by the loved one's often remembering him, and thinking frequently of the kindnesses that he has received from him, and often speaking of the same. Whoever loves in earnest is much more pleased and delighted at this than he would be if the person he loves were to send him many presents and gifts out of his property. Let us take the case of a mother, a lady of high station and wealth, who bears a great love to her absent son. Let her be told that the boy remembers her and often refers to her, that he is continually talking of the comforts in which she reared him, and of the benefits and kind turns which she has ever done him and the labors she has undergone for him, and she will value this more and take more delight and satisfaction in hearing this of her boy than if he sent her many pieces of silk and trinkets of gold without remembering her in any such way. In like manner, then, God our Lord, Who in all other things observes the proprieties and laws of love, observes them in this also, which is a propriety of lovers who love deeply. So He desires, and sets great store by it, that we should ever remember Him and think of Him and of the benefits and marvels that He has wrought for us—especially seeing that, if we exercise ourselves in the memory of these benefits, before long they will awaken in our hearts a desire of serving the Lord earnestly for them.

Blosius relates of the holy virgin Gertrude that she learned from the Lord that every time that one looks with devotion at a figure of Christ crucified, he himself is looked upon with mercy by the most bounteous mercy of God. Let us, then, at least gather this lesson, that, as He did not take it amiss to suffer for our love, so we should not take it amiss to remember what He has suffered for us. It is

related of St. Francis that once, when he was going to Our Lady of Portiuncula hard by, weeping and lamenting with loud cries, a man happened to pass that way, a servant of God who knew him; he, seeing the saint so sad and tearful, thought that he had met with some misfortune and trouble, and went up to him and asked him what it was that occasioned his grief. The saint answered with many tears and sobs: "I am grieving and weeping for the great torments and pains which they gave my Lord Jesus Christ, so entirely without fault of His, and to see how we men forget such a high favor, though it is we who have been the cause of His suffering."

CHAPTER III

Of the Method to Be Followed in Meditating the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer, and of the Sentiment of Compassion Which We Should Draw from Thence

THE way to meditate the Passion of Christ our Redeemer is the same that the masters of spirit commonly teach for the practice of meditation. They advise us not to occupy ourselves entirely in meditation and discursive reasoning on the history, but mainly to move our will to sentiments and desires. These are formed first in the heart, that afterwards in due time they may issue in action. This is that on which we should stay and lay stress in meditation. As he who digs to find water or discover a treasure, uses his spade no more when he finds what he was seeking; so, when by meditation and consideration of the understanding you have discovered the gold and treasure of truth and affection that you sought, you must dig no more with the understanding, now that you have come to the living water that your soul desired and thirsted for, but rest on those affections and desires of the will until you have drunk your fill of that water, and quenched your thirst and are quite

satisfied. This is the end aimed at in meditation and the fruit that we should draw from it, and to this all the meditations and considerations and reflections of the understanding should be ordered and directed. This, then, is the method that we should observe in meditating the Passion of Christ our Redeemer. We will proceed to name the sentiments which should follow from this meditation, noting at the same time certain considerations to awaken them in us.

Many are the sentiments in which we may occupy ourselves and spend our time most profitably, but authors generally reduce them to seven kinds or manners of affections. The first is compassion. To compassionate is to receive pain from another's pain and grief from his grief, keeping company with him in his afflictions with feeling and inward tears, whereby one seems to share the affliction and grief. The suffering is alleviated, and the pain and affliction diminished, by my taking compassion on it, as, contrariwise, when another is in glee at our misfortune and trouble, and laughs and makes game of it, our trouble and grief is increased and we feel it more. Now it is true that we cannot in this way lessen the griefs and afflictions of Christ, because they are things of the past; nevertheless our compassion is very agreeable to Him because thereby in a certain way we make His griefs and afflictions ours. So says the Apostle Paul: *If we are sons, we are heirs also, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, yet so that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him* (Rom. viii. 17). If we take and transfuse into ourselves the pains of Christ by compassion with Him, we shall be heirs of His glory along with Him.

To awaken in ourselves this sentiment of compassion, it will be a help to consider the intensity of the griefs, pains, and torments that Christ our Redeemer bore. As theologians and saints say, they were greater than have been suffered or could be suffered in this life, according to

that text of Jeremy (Lam. i. 12) : *O all ye that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.* First of all, in His body there was no part that did not suffer most grievous pains and torments. *From the sole of his foot to the crown of his head there is no soundness in him,* says Isaias (i. 6). His feet and hands were nailed, His head pierced with a crown of thorns, His face disfigured with spittle and wounded with blows, His whole body torn with scourges and racked by the torment of the Cross. *They have numbered all my bones* (Psalm xxi. 18).

Not only was there pain in His body, but also in His soul. For though the human nature was united with the divine Person, nevertheless He felt the bitterness of His Passion as though there were no such union. Moreover, for the increase of His pain He chose to go without any consolation. That is what He said on the Cross: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* (Matt. xxvii. 46). The holy martyrs in their torments were refreshed by a heavenly and divine consolation, which made them suffer them not only with courage, but even with joy; but Christ our Redeemer, to suffer more for our love, shut the gates all round against all manner of alleviation and consolation, whether from heaven or from earth, as regards the lower portion of His nature. He was forsaken, not only by friends and disciples, but also by His own Father. *He was made as a man without aid or helper,* while all the time He *alone among the dead* was free from sin, and from any deserving of death or pain (Psalm lxxxvii. 5-6). We may get a sufficient inkling of the greatness of Christ's sufferings from the fact that the mere imagination and thought of them in the Garden made Him sweat a sweat of blood so copious and abundant that it ran down on to the earth. What, then, must the utmost suffering have been, when the mere thought of it caused in Him such pain and agony! In short, so great and so severe were His pains and sufferings that the saints say that no mortal man could live under

them without his life's being miraculously preserved, and so it was necessary for Christ to avail Himself of His divinity not to die under them. But this is what the divinity did there, not to prevent His feeling His sufferings, but to prevent the excessive pain that He felt from putting an end to His life, that so He might suffer more. Hence we may also consider and reflect upon the mercy and liberality of the Lord, that, while He wrought miracles for His holy martyrs that they might not feel their torments, in Himself He wrought them only that He might suffer and feel them more for our love.

Besides outward pains, which tormented His body and tormented His soul at the same time, as we have said, He had others, inward pains, which tormented immediately His most holy soul, and they were much greater than the former. From the instant of His conception to the moment of His death, He had ever present all the sins of men committed from the beginning of the world and all those that were to be committed until the end thereof. Now on the one hand He loved God extremely, and saw that these were injuries and offenses committed against God. On the other hand He loved souls extremely and saw how great would be the loss and perdition of them. While He offered His Passion and death for their salvation, He knew nevertheless that such a countless multitude of souls were not to profit thereby, but would seek death rather than life. This consideration wounded Him like a two-edged sword, on the one side for the offense of God, on the other for the loss and damnation of souls. The incomparable sorrows which His most holy soul felt at this are beyond utterance or thought. All this, added to the torments, pains, and affronts which He represented to Himself in the prayer in the Garden, made Him sweat blood in such abundance that it ran down upon the earth. And all other things which He suffered in His life, from the instant of His conception till he expired on the Cross, He had ever before His eyes,

according to the saying of the prophet: *And my grief is ever in my sight* (Psalm xxxvii. 18). Hence we may conclude that all His life was like the day of His Passion. Sometimes the looking forward to adversity and affliction occasions greater pain and torment than the actual enduring of it. Hence we may conclude that His whole life was a sea of immense sufferings which incessantly night and day without measure tormented His most holy soul.

Thus whoever will consider and weigh these things in detail, considering moreover that He who suffers them is the very Son of God and that He suffers for us and for our love, must have a heart harder than stone if he is not moved to compassion. So says St. Bernard: "The earth trembles, the rocks are rent, the tombs are opened, the veil of the Temple is torn, the sun and moon are darkened—good reason surely why we should be struck with compassion at what the Lord has suffered for us." It is not reasonable that we should be harder than the rocks and more insensible than irrational creatures. *My son Absalom, Absalom my son, who will grant me to die for thee!* (II Kings xviii. 33). So said King David, feeling the death of the son who died for rising up against him and driving him out of his kingdom. With how much better reason shall we use such language, feeling for the death of the Son of God, Who died to deliver us from the captivity of the devil and give us the kingdom of His eternal Father!

CHAPTER IV

Of the Sentiment of Sorrow and Contrition for Our Sins, Which We Should Gather from the Meditation on the Passion of Christ Our Lord

THE second sentiment in which we should exercise ourselves, and strive to gather it from meditation on the Lord's Passion, is sorrow and contrition for our sins. This

is one of the most proper fruits that we can gather therefrom, clearly showing us the gravity and malice of sin. By considering the remedy our eyes are opened and we come to see the grave nature of the malady. "O man," says St. Bernard, "know and understand the severity of the wound that needed so costly an appliance for its cure." There is nothing that sets off the gravity of sin—though there comes in here the consideration of the hell that is due to it for ever and ever—so much as the need there was of God's becoming man to pay the debt of so great an evil. In no other way could that debt be paid or satisfaction made in rigor of strict justice, with no infringement or abatement of the justice of God. Since the offense was in a certain manner infinite, as being committed against an infinite God, and no mere man could satisfy for it, by reason of the great distance there is between God and mere man, it was necessary that he who was to make satisfaction should be a person of infinite dignity, equal to Him who had been injured and offended, and as good as He.

Theologians explain this by a comparison. If a shepherd or laborer, a common man and one of low degree, should give blows with a cudgel or with his fist to the king, it is clear that the king would not be satisfied with having other such blows of cudgel or fist given to the shepherd, not even if they gave him two hundred lashes, or even drowned him, for the vast difference of rank there is between a blow or insult offered to the king and the striking or putting to death of a shepherd. How, then, could that king get satisfaction? Do you know how? If the offender were or were made a king as great as he, and then offered him satisfaction, with that the king would be satisfied. Now so it is in this case. Vile man, base and insignificant creature, dust and ashes, had offended and insulted the King of Heaven and Glory; he had, as we have said, struck God with his fist; for that is what a man does, so far as in him lies, when he commits a mortal sin. It would

be no atonement for such an insult, though that base and vile creature were to die for it. How, then, shall atonement be made? If this man were God, equal to Him to Whom the insult has been offered, atonement would be made for the insult by the suffering of such a man. But what remedy is that, seeing that there is no other God, there being no more than one sole true God? Here came in the infinite mercy of God, and the marvelous invention and contrivance that He found, to be able to pardon man without prejudice to His own justice. Being Himself the person offended, and there being no other God that could make satisfaction, God became man that so man might suffer and die, since man it was that had offended and insulted God. That offense and fault having been in a manner infinite, it was requisite that the suffering offered in atonement for it should be of infinite value, which it could only be on condition that the sufferer himself should be God. The works of such a sufferer would be of infinite value, as being the works of an infinite God. Such was the necessity of the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. It well sets out the gravity and malice of sin. So St. John Damascene says that, if for sin God had cast into hell for ever and ever the whole multitude of men that the world has held and shall hold till it comes to an end, divine justice would not have been satisfied and paid as it has been by God's becoming man and dying. This is no hyperbole, no exaggeration, but quite plain truth. All hell and all torments that could be endured there are not a payment equal to the life and death of Christ. By that, as He was God Who made the payment, justice was entirely satisfied to the extent of the whole debt, and even more. But in hell atonement could never be complete for one single [mortal] sin.

According to this I say that one of the chief fruits that we should gather from meditation on the Passion should be greatly to bewail and abhor our sins, that have cost Jesus Christ so much. My sins, O Lord, have been the cause of

these thorns and scourges; I, Lord, have imposed these labors on Thee. This Cross, O Lord, is what I deserved; it is I that should have been spat upon, scourged, and mocked. St. Bernard gives a consideration very pat to our purpose here. I was playing in the square with my companions, and there in the privy council chamber of the king sentence of death was passed upon me. The king's only son, hearing this, took the crown off his head, stripped himself of his royal robes, put on sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and went barefoot, weeping and lamenting that they had condemned to death his servant. Of a sudden I saw him coming out into the street in this guise. I asked the reason, and was told that he was going to die in my stead. What would be the right thing to do in such a case? Who would be so giddy, so ill-mannered, as to go back to his game, and not at least join the prince's company and weep along with him? In this way, then, with these and like reflections we should occupy ourselves in prayer, weeping and grieving for our sins, which have been the cause of the Passion of Christ. So our Father in the Book of Spiritual Exercises, coming to the exercises on the Passion, puts this for the thing to ask for: "Grief and deep feeling of confusion for that on account of my sins Christ has suffered so much." The thing that our Father bids us to ask for in the prelude to any exercise always represents the fruit which he wishes us to gather from thence.

This exercise of sorrow for sin is much recommended to us by the saints. They would not have us forget it, but use it and practise it much, beginners as well as proficient, for the great advantages that it carries. The first advantage is that such an exercise goes far to preserve us in humility and fear of God. One of the strongest and most efficacious motives that we can apply to keep us ever in humility and self-abasement is the consideration of our sins and heartfelt sorrow for them. A man who has offended His Creator and Lord, and so has deserved to be in hell for

ever and ever, what ignominies, what insults, what contempt will he not take in good part, as compensation and satisfaction for the offenses that he has committed against the majesty of God!

Secondly, this is an exercise that carries with it a great assurance of pardon. One of the reflections that go furthest to satisfy a man that God has forgiven his sins, is his having great sorrow and repentance for them. If you keep your sins before your eyes, moving yourself to sorrow and shame for them, God will not look at them, but forget them. That is why the saints kept up such a remembrance of their sins and had them ever before their eyes (*for I know mine iniquity, and my sin is always before me*), that so God may forget them and remove His eyes from them. *Turn away thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities* (Psalm l. 11). So St. Jerome on those words observes: "If you keep your sin before you, God will not keep it before Him." There is nothing that so turns away God's eyes from our sins as our keeping our own eyes on them and entering into sentiments of shame and confusion for them. This is one of the things that will give us the greatest sense of security and satisfaction at the hour of death, and to that end we should have it well prepared beforehand.

In the third place, this is not only a remedy for past sins, but a good preservative medicine to keep us from falling into sin in future. Anyone who is continually blushing and grieving for having offended God is very far from being likely to sin anew.

Fourthly, it is a powerful means to console and assure us that we have given no consent under the temptations and scruples that trouble us. He who goes on making acts of contrition, greatly abhorring sin, and firmly purposing to die rather than commit a mortal sin, may be sure that he has not given any consent under the temptations and scruples that come to him. A man does not consent so easily

to what he so greatly abhors. Moreover, to persevere in this practice is to persevere in the practice of love of God, since true contrition takes its rise from love of God, it being a sorrow for having offended a Lord so good and so worthy of our love and service. The more one knows and loves God, the more one grieves for having offended Him. St. Clement relates of the glorious Apostle St. Peter that at the recollection of his having denied Christ he wept so much that the tears burned his face and made furrows down his cheeks. At the first cockcrow he arose every night to prayer, and slept no more all that night; and this custom he kept up all his life. That is what we should imitate. One of the most profitable exercises that we can practise in meditation and out of meditation is to make acts of contrition, of utter abhorrence of sin, of firm purpose to lose a thousand lives rather than commit one mortal sin, and earnestly beseeching the Lord to take us away rather than permit such a thing. Never permit me, O Lord, to be separated from Thee! What do I want with life, O Lord, but to serve Thee! If I am not to serve Thee, I have no use for it; take me away, O Lord, ere ever I offend Thee!

CHAPTER V

Of the Sentiment of Love of God

THE third sentiment that we should excite and call forth from meditation on the mysteries of the Passion is the love of God. There is nothing that moves us more to love than to see ourselves loved; there are no irons nor chains that bind a man hand and foot so fast as that. The soul considering and pondering very leisurely and attentively the sovereign love of Christ, which shines out so much here, must be inflamed and set on fire with the love of Him Who has loved her so much. The Apostle and Evangelist St. John says: *In this the love of God hath appeared in our*

regard, that God hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we may live by him (I John iv. 9). And the Evangelist St. Luke, on account of the greatness of this love, calls it an excess of love. When the Lord was transfigured in presence of His three disciples, he says that there appeared there Elias and Moses, and they spoke of *the excess that he was to accomplish in Jerusalem*, the excess that was of His Passion and death. With great reason did he call it an excess of love. On one account, because He died for His enemies. It is great love that goes the length of giving one's life for one's friends, so much so that the Savior of the world says that no greater love can be shown than that. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (John xv. 13). But the love of the Son of God for us has gone beyond that, going so far as to lay it down for His enemies. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *What most commendeth God's love for us is this, that when we were sinners, Christ died for us* (Rom. v. 8-9).

Secondly, he calls it an excess of love because one single drop of the blood that He shed in His circumcision or in His sweat of blood in the Garden, and the least work that He ever did for our redemption, was enough as a most just atonement, in strict rigor of justice, for all the world and for a thousand worlds, as the saints say, because it was a work of infinite value for being the work of an infinite God. But His infinite bounty and mercy was not content with that, but would give all His blood and His life for us. So the Apostle St. Paul calls it *an excessive love—nimiam caritatem* (Eph. ii. 4), as being a love infinitely exceeding all possible utterance and thought. And the Prophet Zachary, father of the glorious Baptist, speaking of this benefit, was not content with saying that it proceeded from the mercy of God, but went so far as to say that it proceeded from the *heart of His mercy*, and the innermost heart at that—*per viscera misericordiae* (Luke i. 78).

Who, then, will not love One Who has loved him so much? So the Beloved Disciple: *Let us then love God, because God hath loved us first* (I John iv. 19). Let us answer at least by a return of love and take care to show our love in the way in which He has shown His to us, that is, by deeds that cost us much, for in such is love best discovered and brought to light. So St. Ambrose says: "I owe Thee more, O Lord, for what Thou hast done in redeeming me than for what Thou hast done in creating me." Creation was a great benefit, but after all it cost Thee no labor; all that Thou hadst to do was to speak, and the thing was done. *He spoke, and things were made; he commanded, and they were created* (Psalm cxlviii. 5). But redemption cost Him more than a word; it cost Him His blood and His life. Let us, then, show the love we bear Him, not in words, but in deeds. *Little children, let us love not in word or lips, but in deed and truth*, says St. John (I John iii. 18). The Son of God has shown us the love He bore us by being despised and brought low for our sake; let us show Him the love we bear Him by desiring to be despised and made small account of for His sake, and rejoicing when any occasion of humiliation and mortification offers itself. He showed us the love He bore us by offering Himself entirely in sacrifice to the eternal Father on the Cross, leaving nothing unsacrificed, but giving all for our love. Let us also show the love that we bear Him by offering ourselves and making ourselves over to Him entirely, giving Him our whole heart, desiring that His will and not our will be done in us in all things. In this is shown love, not in words or lip-worship, saying: "Lord, I love Thee much." So the saints explain the saying of St. James: *Patience hath a perfect work* (i. 4), since he who embraces and takes well labor, mortification, and humiliation bears witness that the love he feels is not a prating love, but a working, genuine love, failing not in time of temptation and tribulation, which is the time in which true friends are proved.

This is one of the chiefest fruits that we are to try and gather from meditation on the Passion. We should try to work this well in meditation, particularly by offering ourselves entirely and with our whole heart to God to do with us what He likes, as He likes, when He likes, and in such fashion as He likes, descending herein to particular difficult cases that may occur, leaving out no place or office or station, however mean and lowly it be, to which we do not offer ourselves for His love. This is an exercise of great profit and very high perfection, and a great sign of genuine love.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Sentiment of Gratitude and Thanksgiving

THE fourth sentiment that we should excite in prayer and meditation on the Passion is that of thanksgiving. St. Augustine says: "What better thing can we have in our mind, utter with our lips, write with our pen than *Deo gratias*? Nothing can be shorter to say, more joyful to hear, more lofty to understand, more profitable to do than this." God sets such store by this gratitude and giving of thanks that, whenever He did any singular favor to His people, He at once required them to sing Him a song of praise. *Immolate to the Lord a sacrifice of praise* (Psalm xlix. 14). Scripture we find full of the canticles that the saints and children of Israel composed in thanksgiving for the benefits they had received at the hand of the Lord. St. Jerome says that it was a tradition of the Hebrews that the sickness which befell King Ezechias and brought him to the gates of death was because, on occasion of that so signal and miraculous victory which God had given him over the Assyrians, when the angel of the Lord slew one hundred and eighty thousand of them in one night, he had not sung to God a song of praise as others had been wont to do for

similar favors. Speaking of the ten lepers whom Christ healed, St. Augustine well reflects how the Redeemer of the world praised the one who returned to give thanks for the benefit received and blamed the rest who had been ungrateful and thankless. *Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is none found to return and give glory to God but this stranger* (Luke xvii. 17-18). Let us, then, not be ungrateful for the benefits that we have received at the hand of God, and especially for this greatest of benefits, that He has made Himself man and laid Himself on the Cross for us. *Forget not the benefit done thee by thy surety, for he has given his life for thee*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxix. 19). Christ came forward as our surety and made payment on our behalf, giving His lifeblood for that purpose; it is reasonable that we should not forget so great a boon and blessing, but be grateful for it.

St. Thomas, treating of gratitude, says that thanks may be paid in three ways: first, interiorly in the heart, recognizing and esteeming the greatness of the benefit and holding oneself much bounden to the benefactor; secondly, by praising and thanking him in words; thirdly, by recompensing the benefit in deeds according to the capacity of the recipient. In all these ways we ought to practise thanksgiving for every mystery of the Passion. First, by recognizing in our heart the greatness of such many excellent benefits as are contained in every mystery and esteeming them much, studying in detail all the circumstances and all the blessings that thereby have come to us and shall come to us for eternity, and acknowledging and confessing our obligation to make perpetual return for them with all our strength. Secondly, by praising and glorifying God also with our lips and desiring that all creation should aid us in praising Him and thanking Him for them, according to St. Paul: *Through him, therefore, let us offer a sacrifice of praise ever to God, that is, the fruit of lips confessing to*

his name (Heb. xiii. 15). Thirdly, by endeavoring to correspond in deeds to such benefits, offering and resigning to Him our whole heart.

St. Bernard says that on every mystery that we consider we should make account that Christ our Redeemer speaks to us those words which He said to His disciples after having washed their feet: *Do ye know what I have done for you?* (John xiii. 12). Do you understand this mystery? Do you understand this benefit of creation, of redemption, of vocation? Oh, how far are we from knowing or understanding what God has done for us! For if I did know and seriously reflect that Thou, O Lord, God as Thou art, hast become man for me, and laid Thyself on a cross for me, there would be need of no other motive for me to melt away in Thy love and give over to Thee my whole heart. That would be true gratitude.

Here St. Chrysostom makes a very profitable observation. He says that it is the affection and sentiment of a faithful servant to esteem and be grateful for the Lord's benefits that are common to all as though they were done to himself alone, and he alone were indebted for them and obliged to make a return for them all. So did the Apostle St. Paul, when he said: *Who hath loved me, and given himself up for me* (Gal. ii. 20). He had good reason for saying this, and we may say the same, says St. Chrysostom, since the benefit does as much good to me as if it had been conferred on me alone. The sun's light lights my path as much as if it lit mine alone, and its giving light to others is no diminution of the gift to me, but rather an increase, since in lighting the way for others it gives me company to aid and comfort me and do me good. So God's having become man and suffered death on the Cross is as beneficial to me as if it had been done for me only; its profiting others is no diminution of my profit, but rather a great increase, since it gives me companions to love me and cheer me and aid me to merit and increase my glory in heaven.

Furthermore, the love of God for each one is as great as if He had him alone to love, and no one else. So far as Christ's will and love went, He was willing to suffer and work these mysteries for each one, if it were necessary, as for all. In fact, says St. Chrysostom, Christ's love was so great that He would not have refused to do for one individual what He did for the whole world. Moreover, it is true that God bore us in mind individually and had me present before His eyes when He made Himself man and when He died on the Cross. *I have loved thee with perpetual love* (Jer. xxxi. 3). He counted the cost of His death well spent to give me life. Thus each one should consider the mysteries and benefits of the Lord as though they had been wrought for him alone. The love, also, which gave rise to the benefit should be regarded by each one as though he had been the only object of God's love. Each should say with St. Paul: *He hath loved me and given himself up to death for me*. Considered in this way, the benefits and the love from which they proceeded will awaken in our soul great gratitude and great love for Him who has loved us ever with a perpetual love.

The saints add that God's asking us to return thanks for His benefits is not because He has any need of our gratitude, but it is all for our greater good and advantage, for in this way we make ourselves worthy of new benefits. St. Bernard says that ingratitude and forgetfulness of benefits received gives God cause to strip man of them. "Ingratitude is a burning wind that dries up and consumes everything, and blocks and closes the fountain of God's mercy"—*Ingratitudo est ventus urens, fontem pietatis exsiccans, rorem misericordiae et gratiae fluentia non recipiens*. So gratitude and giving thanks to God for His benefits move God to preserve and increase them. As the rivers run into the sea, which is, as it were, their fountain, to rise and return from it once more, so, when we return to God with thanksgiving the benefits received from Him, new gifts and benefits stream back again upon us.

CHAPTER VII

Of the Sentiments of Admiration and Hope

THE fifth sentiment that we can exercise in prayer and meditation on the Passion is admiration, dwelling with admiration on the fact that God, Who is impassible and immortal, should have suffered and died—wondering that He should have suffered and died for those very persons who were putting Him to death and were so unworthy of any good—wondering how He suffered grief and torments so many and so great as no mortal man ever suffered—wondering at the immense charity and tender love of God, at His infinite wisdom and most high counsel, shown in His choosing a remedy so appropriate for the salvation of man, fulfilling at once His justice and His mercy. For a man to dwell on these considerations and others like them which are resplendent here, very leisurely, pondering and admiring them, and the infinite goodness of the Lord, Who wrought such works for such vile, unworthy, and ungrateful creatures, is an excellent meditation. And they even take this for a very high contemplation, when a man is wholly taken up and absorbed in considering and reflecting on the wonderful works of God. The greater light and knowledge one has of these mysteries and the more he reflects on them, the more he will wonder at them, and in this admiration there is included a great love of God, great recognition of and gratitude for His benefits, and deep shame of ourselves. So we should frequently endeavor to arouse in ourselves this holy sentiment, for we shall draw great profit from it. In many places in the Psalms Holy Scripture puts at the end of the verse the Hebrew word *Selah*, which means *Stop*, in reflection and admiration on the mystery, to teach us that we should dwell on this sentiment in the mysteries that we meditate.

The sixth sentiment that we may draw from meditation on the Passion is a great hope and confidence in God. The soul, considering how much God has done for her without any desert on her part, or rather, very ill desert, and considering the earnest will that Christ our Redeemer has shown for her salvation, since that is the thirst which He said He felt on the Cross, is thereby raised to hope of such bounty and mercy that He will give all things necessary and proper for her salvation. *He who hath not spared His own Son, but hath given him over to death for us, how can it be that with him he hath not given us all things?* says the Apostle St. Paul (Rom. viii. 32). And if God did this for us when we were enemies, what will He do when we are striving to be His friends? Let this argument be well marked; it is that of St. Paul (Rom. v. 10), and very consoling. If, when we were enemies and went on offending God, He regarded us with eyes of mercy and reconciled us at so much cost to Himself, with what eyes will He regard us now that we are His friends and need not cost Him His lifeblood any more, as we did then, but all the cost has been already paid! How much will He love us now that He has cleansed and washed us in His Precious Blood, seeing that He did us such a good turn when we were defiled with our sins! If, when we fled from Him and resisted His inspirations, He nevertheless sought us out and invited us and would not leave us until He had drawn us into His house, how can He leave us and forget us after He has so drawn us?

It will also help us greatly in eliciting this sentiment of confidence to dig and delve down deep in the greatness of God's mercy; for this the Church sings that it is proper to God always to show mercy and to spare. *Deus, cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere* (Collect for the Dead). It is true that God is a judge likewise, and His justice is as great as His mercy, for they are all one in God; but the work most proper to God, the work that He does of His

own accord and most fully of His own will, is mercy, as the Royal Prophet sings: *The Lord is good and gentle to all, but his mercies are above all his works* (Psalm cxliv. 9). It is that in which He excels and shines most; that is the work that more than any other He calls His own, the work that is called eminently and most excellently the work of God. So the Apostle St. Paul calls God *rich in mercy* (Eph. ii. 4). Though He is rich in all things, He is said particularly to be rich in mercy. Such a phrase brings out excellence on some particular point. As we say here: "Jonathan is rich in flocks and herds," so that in which God is most rich, and His riches rise to an eminent and surpassing height, is in mercy. "O God, Who dost manifest Thine almighty power most of all in sparing and showing mercy"—*Deus qui omnipotentiam tuam parcendo maxime et miserando manifestas*, so sings the Church. In this it is that the omnipotence and greatness of God most manifestly appears, in pardoning and showing mercy, and on this He prides Himself most. As we see on earth a knight who has many good points priding himself more particularly on one, this man on being just, that other on being liberal, so God prides Himself most on being merciful.

To show mercy, says St. Bernard, is the proper work of God, and the work that He does of His own accord. Of His own nature He is running over with mercies and benefits; and He needs no merit of ours, nor does He depend on that, to deal mercifully with us. But to punish is, as it were, foreign to God's nature; for that it is necessary that we should provoke Him and compel Him thereto by our sins. It is the nature and property of the bee to make honey, but to sting is a thing that she does not except when molested and provoked thereto—it is as it were perforce and under wrongful provocation that she comes to do that; so, when God comes to chastise and condemn, it is, as it were, perforce, under what we may call the provocation and compulsion of our sins. And even then, when being greatly pro-

voked and, as we may say, compelled, He comes to punish, He clearly shows His mercy in the grief and regret that He displays, as we see in many passages of Scripture. When the wickedness of men grew, and God was minded to send the deluge, the Sacred Text says: *Touched with grief of heart within, he said, I will destroy man whom I have created, and blot him out from the face of the earth* (Gen. vi. 6-7). It went to His heart to have to lay waste the earth. And the holy Gospel says that Christ our Redeemer wept when He prophesied the ruin of Jerusalem. *Seeing the city, he wept over it* (Luke xix. 41). And by Isaias He says: *Alas, I shall take satisfaction from mine enemies, and wreak my vengeance on my foes* (Isaias i. 24); as the judge who can do no otherwise than pronounce the sentence of death, pronounces it nevertheless with tears.

And not only in this, but in the very chastisement and judgment that God threatens us and seeks to terrify us therewith, His infinite love and mercy is clearly seen, and the great desire that He has of our salvation. St. Chrysostom remarks this well in that saying of the prophet: *If ye are not converted, he will brandish his sword: he hath bent his bow and made it ready; and in it he hath prepared instruments of death, fiery arrows* (Psalm vii. 13-14). Great is the clemency and loving-kindness of the Lord, says the saint, to threaten us with a bow and frighten us, and put forward the punishment in forcible words, that we may not come to fall under it. God deals with us in the way that earthly fathers are wont to deal with their children whom they dearly love. They show their displeasure in severe terms, and say what they will do and what is going to happen, that the boy may be frightened and thereupon mend his ways, so that there may be no need to resort to punishment. Again, a stroke with a sword is given at close quarters, but the bow and catapult strike from afar. To wound with the sword, all that is needed is to draw it and give the stroke; but to wound with the bow it is necessary

to string it first, then to draw the arrows out of the quiver and set them on the string. All this stringing and unstringing makes a noise; and therefore the Lord threatens us with a bow, that we may have time to fly from the punishment and escape it, according to the text of the prophet: *Thou hast given a sign to them that fear thee, that they may fly from before the bow, that thy beloved ones may escape* (Psalm lix. 6). And, being about to destroy the world by the deluge, He gave notice a hundred years before, that men might recollect themselves, as one does who purposes to let out the bull. All this shows love and desire not to punish if it could be avoided. In his seventeenth homily on Genesis, speaking of how God punished the serpent that had deceived Eve, the same saint says: See the great mercy of God, how as an earthly father, who greatly loves his son, is not content with punishing his murderer, but takes the sword or lance with which the murder was committed and breaks it into a thousand pieces; so God our Lord dealt with the serpent, who had acted as the sword and instrument of the devil's malice, and condemned it to perpetual punishment. *For God willeth not the death of the sinner, nor rejoices in the perdition of men.* Had it been otherwise, you have given Him occasion enough; for if you had died at the time you know, you would have been by this time many years in hell; but infinite Goodness and Mercy would not give leave to death and the devil for that. *Do I perchance will the death of the sinner, and not rather that he be converted from his ways and live?* says God by the Prophet Ezechiel (xviii. 23). He would not condemn you, because you have cost Him very dear. You have cost Him His lifeblood; so He would not willingly lose what He has bought at so great a price, but would have all men converted and saved, as the Apostle St. Paul says: *Who wisheth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (I Tim. ii. 4). From these and other considerations, of which Holy Scripture and the writings of the saints are

full, we should be helped to trust greatly in the mercy of God, and especially that of which we now treat, to betake ourselves to the Passion and merits of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Imitation of Christ as the Fruit Which We Should Gather from Meditation on His Mysteries

THE seventh thing that we should gather and should exercise ourselves upon in meditation and prayer on the Passion is imitation of the virtues that there shine forth in Christ. There are two chief reasons, so the saints tell us, why the Son of God came into the world, made Himself man, and wrought these most holy mysteries. The first and chiefest was to redeem man by His death and Passion. The second was to give man a most perfect example of all virtues, and persuade men at the same time to imitate and follow Him in the practice of them. To that end, having done at the Last Supper that work of most profound humility, going down on His knees before His disciples and washing their feet with His divine hands, He said to them thereupon: *I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so ye do* (John xiii. 15). And the counsel that He then gave them as regards this work, He would have us take as applying to all the rest, as the Apostle St. Peter signifies in his first canonical epistle, where, speaking of the Lord's Passion, he says: *Christ hath suffered for us, leaving us an example that we follow in his footsteps* (I Pet. ii. 21). And so the blessed St. Augustine says: "The Cross is not only the bed on which Christ died, but also the chair from which He taught us by His example what we are to do and imitate"—*Cruz Christi non solum est lectulus morientis, sed et cathedra docentis*.

And although the life of Christ was a most perfect example and pattern of virtue, yet He has seemed to wish to sum

up in His Passion all that His whole life long He had taught us by word and example, making all virtues shine forth in it to their highest degree. So we should strive to draw from the consideration of these mysteries desires of imitation of the virtues of Christ, considering and weighing leisurely and attentively each virtue by itself, and drawing thence a strong sentiment and desire of that virtue in our will, and an efficacious determination and resolution to practise it and put the acts and operations thereof into execution, along with great hatred and abhorrence of the contrary vice. Thus in consideration of the humility of Christ, how, God as He was, He abased Himself and willingly gave Himself over to the insults and affronts of men—and such affronts too—a man should thereupon make naught of himself, taking himself for something small and cheap and heartily desiring that they should pay him no honor nor esteem, nor give him precedence over others; and purpose that, if any affronts and signs of contempt on the part of men do befall him, he will suffer them cheerfully and rejoice in their being offered him, the better to imitate and appear in everything like unto Christ our Lord. In the same way, considering the patience of Christ, he should purpose to suffer willingly and accept cheerfully any adversities that may befall him, and desire that they may befall him and that God may send him afflictions and pains in this life in imitation of Christ our Lord. St. Bonaventure used to say: “I do not want, O Lord, to live without wounds and pains, since I see Thee so full of them”—*Nolo, Domine, sine vulnere vivere, quia te video vulneratum*. In this way we should go through all the rest of the virtues—obedience, charity, meekness, chastity, poverty, abstinence—since they all shine forth here, exercising ourselves in desire to imitate Christ in them all.

Here is to be observed a point we have touched on before, that in each virtue we should descend to particular occasions that may occur, accepting them and rejoicing in them

for the love of God, for this is more profitable than generalities and more necessary for us. Thus, if you are on the virtue of humility, you should descend to the imagination of particular occasions that are likely or possible to occur of your being depreciated and held in small esteem; first the easier occasions and then the more difficult ones, that you think you would feel more if they did occur, and you should dwell upon them, eliciting acts and rejoicing in them as if they were present. And in the same manner when you are on indifference, patience, mortification, or conformity with the will of God. In this manner, little by little, the virtue sinks into your soul, and the contrary passion or vice is mitigated and reduced. Thus subsequent action will be rendered easier when occasion offers, you being forewarned and forearmed to meet it; and to this end the desires and resolutions made in meditation are directed.

Here we have given very copious and abundant matter, very rich and profitable, to occupy ourselves therewith in prayer and meditation on the Passion of Christ our Lord, as also on the mysteries of His most holy life. And no one can reasonably say that he does not know what to do or how to occupy himself therein, since we have mentioned so many sentiments on which we may dwell in each point. To this we may add that in every mystery and in every sentiment suggested by those mysteries, to move ourselves the more thereto we may consider and ponder the following things: first, Who it is that suffers; secondly, what it is that He suffers; thirdly, in what disposition He suffers—to wit, the patience, humility, meekness, and love with which He suffers and embraces those afflictions and insults; fourthly, for whom He suffers; fifthly, from whom; sixthly, the end for which He suffers. These are the points generally assigned here by the saints, and we may dwell on them with great profit.

And though there were nothing else, we have in this last sentiment alone of desire of imitation matter for all our

life, as may be seen in two ways. First, because we may run through all the virtues, having need of them all, and shall find them all in Christ. Secondly, because under each virtue we confront particular occasions that are likely or possible to occur. We should have the way smoothed to the practice of them all, and so smoothed as not only to meet the occasions with patience, but with joy and cheerfulness. Here we have occupation for a whole lifetime even on one virtue, much more when there are so many. And so I say that, although the other sentiments mentioned are of leading importance, yet this of imitation is the chiefest and most necessary of all. It contains the sentiment of love of God and the rest that we have enumerated, and embraces all the acts of the virtues. Thus the desire to imitate is not one sentiment only, but is a compendium and sum of all holy sentiments in which Christian life and the perfection thereof consist. This, then, should be our ordinary theme in meditation on the Passion of Christ and His most holy life, and the chief fruit that we should aim at gathering therefrom, each one insisting on the imitation of that virtue of which he stands in greatest need, resting on that, digging and delving down deep and making acts thereof until that virtue comes to saturate him through and through and take root and be deep-seated in his heart, and the contrary passion and vice mitigated and appeased. Then he may pass on to another virtue, and then to another. This is better and more profitable than nibbling in meditation at many things and passing lightly over them.

CHAPTER IX

*In Which Is Established by Sundry Examples How
Profitable and Agreeable to God Is Meditation on
the Passion of Christ Our Redeemer*

SILVESTER relates of St. Mary Magdalene that after the Ascension of Christ our Redeemer she retired to a rugged solitude where she persevered thirty-two years. She begged our Savior to teach her in what exercise she should occupy herself in this solitude, to be most pleasing and most acceptable to Him. He therefore sent her at the beginning the Archangel Michael, with a most fair cross in his hands, which he planted at the gate of her cave, that henceforth the saint might have it before her at all hours, without ever losing sight of it, nor ever losing sight either of the holy mysteries which it represented and had been wrought thereon. All the time that she was in this solitude, she meditated continually on those mysteries of the Passion and death of her Redeemer and Master. The saint revealed this to a servant of God of the Order of St. Dominic, as may be read at greater length in the same Silvester.

Lewis the Carthusian tells of a servant of God who lived a very perfect and holy life; he desired greatly to serve our Lord and to know in particular what works and services were most agreeable to Him, that he might do them for His love. He begged the Lord with much fervor and earnestness to show him this. On one occasion at prayer, making his usual petition, Christ appeared to him, all wounded, naked, and trembling, with a heavy cross on His shoulder, and said to him: "One of the things that please Me most and in which My servants render Me the greatest service is in aiding Me to carry this cross, which they will do by accompanying Me in thought in all My pains and labors, and taking them tenderly to heart." These words said, He vanished.

Vincent, St. Anthony, and Surius, in the Life of St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury in England, relate that, when this saint was a boy of tender age, studying the elements of grammar at the University of Oxford, and was one day walking alone in the fields, plunged in holy meditations, there suddenly appeared to him the Child Jesus, white and ruddy as the spouse depicts Him (Cant. v. 10). He made Himself known, and held with Edmund most sweet conversations. Among other things He advised and strongly recommended him henceforth every day to think of some mystery of His life, holy Passion, and death, assuring him that he would find that a great help and succor against the devil and his wiles, and a most efficient means for gaining and keeping himself in all virtue, and in the end for securing a good and happy death. Having given this so wholesome advice, He vanished, leaving the boy Edmund with great comfort at heart. From that time onwards he was very careful to meditate every day at nightfall some mystery of the life or Passion of Christ, and from that meditation he gathered great devotion and no less profit and remedy for all his needs.

In the history of St. Dominic there is written a notice of a religious of that holy order, a German by birth, a man of high virtue and sanctity, how from youth he had a particular devotion to the Passion of Christ and used to think of it very frequently with great emotion and tears, reverencing His most sacred wounds and repeating over each of them the words of the Church: "We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee, because by Thy holy Cross Thou hast redeemed the world." With these words, he genuflected seven times, saying each time the Our Father, and begging God to grant him His holy fear and love. And how acceptable and agreeable to God this devotion was, was clearly shown in a singular favor and consolation that was vouchsafed to the reciter of it. For when he was at prayer, Christ our Redeemer appeared to him, looking very bountiful and gracious, and invited him to draw nigh without

fear and taste of His wounds, which he did with profound reverence and humility, applying his mouth to them; and so great was the delight and sweetness that he tasted in his soul thereby that ever afterwards everything that was not God was bitter and an incredible torment to him.

Lipoman and Surius relate of the holy Abbot Palemon, master of St. Pacomius, that one Easter Sunday Pacomius dressed for dinner the ordinary herbs with a little oil and salt, for its being the day it was, whereas on other days his master used to eat herbs only with a little salt. When the holy old man saw them dressed with oil, he began to weep and shed many tears, remembering the Passion of the Lord and saying: "My Master was crucified, and am I to venture to eat oil?" His disciple Pacomius replied that it was Easter Day, and therefore he might allow himself this delicacy; but for all his urgent entreaties to acquiesce in the preparation, he could do nothing with him.

It is told of a Christian captive among the Moors that he was very devout to the Passion of Christ, and for the continual memory that he had of it he went about always sad and weeping. His master, seeing it, asked him sometimes what made him so sad and why he could never make merry with his companions. He always replied that he could not because he had imprinted on his heart the Passion of the Lord. The master, hearing this reply, wanted to know if he spoke the truth; and upon opening his breast and drawing out the heart, they found within it a figure of Christ crucified, most artistically formed, which marvel was a means to the master's conversion to the faith.

A similar thing is related of the holy virgin Clara of Montefalcone. In her life she had been very devout to the Passion of Christ, and after her death there was found in her heart on one side the figure of a crucifix, with three nails, lance, sponge, and reed, while on the other side there were the scourge, with five thongs, the pillar and crown of thorns; which marvel is to this day exhibited at Montefalcone, a place in Italy.

SIXTEENTH TREATISE

ON HOLY COMMUNION AND THE MASS

CHAPTER I

Of the Inestimable Benefit and Great Love That the Lord Has Shown Us in the Institution of This Divine Sacrament

TWO works there are that God has shown us, of all that He has done the most signal, the most apt to astound and cut short the judgments of men. So subtle their contrivance that the Prophet Isaias, speaking of them, calls them *inventions of God*. *Make known among the peoples his inventions* (Isaias xii. 4). They are works in which it looks as though God had set Himself to think in what way He could show Himself eager to communicate and pour Himself out. The first work was the Incarnation, in which the Word of the Father conjoined and united Himself with our nature in a bond so binding and a knot so tight and close that God and man came to be together in one Person. A knot to which all the reason of the world is blind, and to God alone is it clear; darkness and obscurity to all, and to Him alone light and brightness; an indissoluble knot which, once tied, shall never be untied or undone. What He has once assumed, He has never abandoned.

St. Denis says that love is a unitive power, which transforms the lover into the beloved and makes of the two one. Now what no love that ever has been on earth could ever do, that the love of God for man has done. Never had it been seen below the heavens that love had truly made love and beloved into one. Above the heavens that is well seen; the very nature of the Father is that of the Son, and They are one; but below the heavens such a union had never been realized. But the love of God for man has been so great that He has conjoined and united Himself with man in such sort that of God and man there has come to be only one Person; and that so strictly one that man is true God and God is true man; and all that is proper to God can with

truth and propriety be said of man; and, conversely, what is proper to man is said also of God. Thus He Whom men saw, was God; He Whom they beheld speaking by means of bodily lips, was God. He Whom they beheld eating, walking, toiling, was God. He had a real human nature and real human activities; and He Who discharged those activities was God. *Who ever heard or saw the like?* says the Prophet Isaias (lxvi. 8). God is a child, God wrapped in swaddling clothes, God weeping, God in weakness, God weary and suffering pains and torments! There the Royal Prophet says: *Lord, thou hast set thy resting-place on high, evil shall not come near thee, and the scourge shall not approach thy dwelling* (Psalm xc. 9). But now we see, Lord, that the scourges have come near Thee, and the nails, and the thorns, and they have put Thee on a cross; a thing so alien from God, says Isaias, *a strange thing* (Isaias xxviii. 21), a thing that bewilders and arrests the judgments of men and angels.

There has been another work of God, an invention proper to His infinite love, the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament. In the former, He covered His Godhead with a cloak of flesh, that we might be able to see Him; in this, He covers not only His divine but also His human nature with the cloak of accidents that we may have Him for our food. In the former, God gave welcome to man, uniting a human nature with the divine Word, and so made man enter into the innermost depths of the Godhead; in the latter, God wishes you to welcome Him in the innermost depths of your heart. Before, man was united to God; now God and man seeks to be united to you. In the former, the communication and union was with one sole individual nature which is the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord, hypostatically united to the eternal Word. In this latter, He unites Himself to each individual that receives Him, and makes Himself one with him—not now by an hypostatical or personal union, for that were not convenient, but by a union the most

intimate and closest that can be imagined short of that. *He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, is in me and I in him*, says the Lord Himself (John vi. 57). Marvelous work! Not only is it the greatest of His miracles, as St. Thomas says, but it is the sum and compendium of them all.

Holy Scripture tells us of King Ashuerus that he made a great and solemn banquet, which lasted one hundred and eighty days, to show his great riches and the glory of his power (Esther i. 3-4). So that great Ashuerus, Christ our Redeemer, has wished to make a royal banquet, to show the greatness of His treasures and riches, and the power and majesty of His glory. The food that is given us in this banquet is God Himself, a work to move the admiration and astonishment of the world, no less than the former. Even over the mere shadow of this admirable mystery, which was the manna, people broke out into the wondering exclamation: *Manhu, what is this?* (Exod. xvi. 15). And afterwards they said: *How can he give us his flesh to eat?* (John vi. 53). And this banquet did not last one hundred and eighty days, as that of King Ashuerus lasted, but has lasted sixteen hundred years, and shall last till the end of the world; it is always being eaten and always endures. With reason did the prophet exclaim: *Come and see the works of the Lord, the wonders that he hath wrought on earth* (Psalm xlv. 9). Amazing the contrivance and wisdom of the counsels of God that He has taken for the salvation of men! It is of this second work that we are to treat now; the Lord give us His grace thereto, whereof we have great need.

The glorious Apostle and Evangelist St. John in his holy Gospel, speaking of the institution of this Most Holy Sacrament, says: *When he had loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end* (John xiii. 1): for it was then that He did them the greater favors and left them the greater pledges of His love, among which one of the chief-

est, or even the chiefest of all, was this Most Holy Sacrament. Therein His Majesty abides truly and really, and in so doing He markedly shows the great love that He bears us. It is the mark of true love to wish to keep its object ever present and ever to enjoy the company of the same, because love cannot bear the absence of the beloved. So when it was time for Christ our Redeemer to leave this world and go to His Father, He wished to depart in such a way as not entirely to depart, and in such a way to go as still to stay. Thus as He came forth from heaven without leaving heaven, so now He goes away from earth without leaving earth; and as He went forth from His Father without leaving Him, so now He goes away from His children without leaving them.

It is further in the nature of love to desire to live in the memory of the beloved, and seek to be ever remembered on his part. For this end, when friends part, they give one another memorials and pledges to awaken this memory. In order, then, that we may never forget Him, He has left us for a memorial this Most Holy Sacrament, in which He Himself dwells in person, wishing that between Him and us there should be no less a pledge to awaken this memory than Himself. So, after instituting this Most Holy Sacrament, He said: Every time you celebrate this mystery, celebrate it in memory of Me, remembering how much I have loved you, how earnestly I have sought after you, and how much I have suffered on your account (Luke xxii. 19; I Cor. xi. 24, 26).

Of the people of Israel, Moses vaunted greatly: *There is no nation so great as to have its gods nigh unto it as our God is nigh unto us, being ever at hand to hear all our supplications* (Deut. iv. 7). Solomon, having built the Temple, stood amazed and said: *Is it possible that God should dwell with men on earth? If heaven and earth, in all their vast amplitude, are not enough to find room for thee, how much less shall this house which I have built!* (III Kings viii. 27).

How much more reason have we to say this, seeing that now it is no longer a figure, but God Himself, that we have for our companion! *Lo, I am with you all days even to the end of the world* (Matt. xxviii. 20). A great comfort and a great favor it is that Christ our Redeemer should wish to remain in our company to console us and lighten the burden of our pilgrimage. If here the company of a friend consoles us in our labors and afflictions, what should it be to have Jesus Christ Himself in our company—to see God enter in at our gates, pass through our wards and streets, be taken up and carried and enthroned in our temples, so that we can visit Him repeatedly and at all hours, day and night, and treat with Him of our affairs face to face, giving Him an account of our labors, recounting to Him our troubles, imparting to Him our temptations, and begging redress and favor for all our needs, in confidence that He Who has loved us so much as to will to be so near us, will not stand aloof when we ask for a remedy for our woes. I will go and *take up My abode in the midst of you*; I will go where you wish to carry Me; *I am ready to pass through your streets*; I am ready to honor you (Levit. xxvi. 11-12).

Not content with our having Him in our temples and houses, the Lord has wished that we should have Him within our heart; He has wished you yourself to be the temple and chalice, the monstrance and reliquary, where this Most Holy Sacrament should be laid and placed. He does not give Himself here to kiss, as He did to the shepherds and the kings, but to receive Him into our breasts. O unspeakable love! O unheard-of bounty! That I should receive into my breast and into my heart God Himself in person! Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man! The same that the most holy Queen of Angels received and bore nine months in her most pure womb! If St. Elizabeth, mother of the glorious Baptist, on occasion of Thy Virgin Mother, in whose womb Thou wert carried, entering her house, marveled, and full of the Holy Ghost cried aloud,

saying: *Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me!* (Luke i. 43), what shall I say, when Thou comest not by the gates of my material house, but of my body and soul, within me into my innermost self, Thou, O Lord, Son of the living God! With how much more reason may I say, *Whence is this to me!* to me who for so long a time have been the abode of the devil! to me who so often have offended Thee! to me, so thankless and ungrateful! Whence is this to me except from the greatness of Thy mercy, and from Thy being what Thou art, so good, such a lover of men! Whence but from Thine infinite love!

Saints further consider, and with much reason, that, if the Lord had granted this boon only to the innocent and pure, still it would be an inestimable bounty; but what shall we say now that by reason of His wishing to communicate Himself to them He has obliged Himself to pass through the hands of many wicked ministers; and as He allowed Himself to be crucified for our love by the hands of those perverse executioners, so He permits Himself now to be handled by wicked and perverse priests and enter into mouths and bodies, filthy and foul, of many wicked men and sinners, to visit and console His friends! To all this the Lord exposes Himself, and wills to be again and again sold and mocked and crucified and put between thieves, as St. Paul says that they who sin, so far as in them lies, crucify Jesus Christ again (Heb. vi. 6); all this He undergoes to communicate Himself to you. See if we have not good cause to give Him thanks and good cause to serve Him. The Church sings in astonishment that this great Lord had no horror of entering into a maiden's womb; but lay side by side the purity of this maiden and our impurity, and you will see how much greater reason we have to be astonished that He has had no horror of entering into the breast of a sinner.

CHAPTER II

Of the Excellent and Wonderful Things That Faith Teaches for Our Belief in This Divine Sacrament

MANY are the wonderful things that faith teaches us as being wrought by the words of consecration. The first thing that we have to believe is that, as soon as the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration over the host, there is there the true body of Christ our Redeemer, the same that was born of the virginal womb of the most holy Virgin, the same that was on the Cross and rose again, the same that now is seated on the right hand of the Father. And when the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration over the chalice, there is there the true and Precious Blood. And supposing there to be said at the same hour all over the Church one hundred thousand Masses, in the instant in which the priest has done pronouncing the words of consecration God works this wonderful change; and in all those Masses there is the real and true body and blood of Christ our Redeemer; here they are consuming it, here they are consecrating it, but everywhere it is one and the same.

The second wonderful thing that we have to believe is that after the words of consecration there remains nor bread nor wine on the altar; although to our eyes, touch, taste, and smell, it appears to us that it does remain, yet faith tells us that it does not. The patriarch Isaac said to his son Jacob, on the occasion when, to gain the blessing and the birthright of the elder brother, Jacob had covered his hands with goatskins to resemble his brother: *The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau* (Gen. xxii. 22). So here, what we feel with our hands and touch with our senses has the appearance of bread and the appearance of wine, but the voice, that is, faith, tells us it is something else. Faith supplies the defect of the

senses—*praestet fides supplementum sensuum defectui*. And there in the desert, the manna, the shadow and figure of this Sacrament, had also this property, that it tasted like all kinds of things—it tasted like partridge, and it was not partridge; it tasted like trout and it was not trout—so this divine manna tastes like bread, and is not bread; tastes like wine, and is not wine. In the other sacraments the matter is not changed into anything else, but the water in baptism remains water, and the oil, oil in the sacraments of confirmation and extreme unction; but in this Sacrament the matter is changed. Thus what appears bread is not bread, and what appears wine is not wine; but the substance of bread is changed and converted into the true body of Christ our Savior, and the substance of wine into His Precious Blood. St. Ambrose says very well: “He who could make something out of nothing in creating the heavens and the earth, much more should be able to make one thing into another thing and change one substance into another.” Besides, we see that the bread we daily eat is in a short time changed into our flesh by virtue of the natural heat of our body; much more should the almighty power of God be able to effect in an instant this marvelous conversion. And that by seeing one wonder we may cease to wonder at another, it is much more wonderful that God should have made Himself man without ceasing to be God, than that what was bread should cease to be bread and be converted into flesh. But by that divine power whereby the Son of God made Himself Man, by that same the bread and wine are converted into the flesh and blood of Christ; for *to God nothing is impossible*, as the Angel said to our Lady (Luke i. 37).

Thirdly, there is another peculiarity of this conversion, not according to the manner of other natural changes. In them, when one thing is changed into another, there remains something of the substance of the thing that is changed, since the matter remains the same and the only

thing changed is the form; as when earth is changed into silver, and water into crystal. It is as when out of a little clay or wax you make once in a way a horse or a lion. But in this admirable conversion, after the consecration, there remains in the host nothing of the substance of bread; and in the chalice there remains nothing of the substance of wine, neither form nor matter, but the whole substance of bread is converted and changed into the whole body of Christ; and the whole substance of wine into His Precious Blood. And so the Church, very appropriately and rightly, as the Council of Trent declares, to signify this total conversion, calls it *transubstantiation*, which means the change of one substance into another. As natural generation may be properly called *transformation*, because in it the form is changed; so in this Sacrament the change is very rightly called *transubstantiation*, because the whole substance of the bread and wine is converted into the whole substance of the body and blood of Christ.

Thus there does not remain in this Sacrament anything of the substance of bread; there remains in it only color, smell, taste, and the other accidents of bread and wine, which are called "the sacramental species." And this is another great wonder that shines forth in this Most Holy Sacrament, that these accidents are there without being in any substance or subject, whereas it is the property of accidents to be united and attached to substance, as all philosophy teaches; since whiteness clearly cannot naturally be by itself, but must be conjoined and united with some substance, and the same of taste and smell. But here, above the whole order of nature, the same accidents of bread and wine remain, being supernaturally supported by themselves, as it were in the air, since the substance of bread and wine, as we have said, is no longer there, and in the body and blood of Christ, which takes its place, those accidents cannot be; and thus God of Himself sustains and supports them by a perpetual miracle.

Further, we have to believe that in this Most Holy Sacrament, under the species and accidents of bread, there is not only the body of Christ, but the whole Christ, true God and true man, as He is in heaven. Thus in the host, along with the body, there is also the blood of Christ our Redeemer, and His most sacred soul, and His most holy divinity. In like manner in the chalice, under the species of wine, there is not only the blood of Christ, but also His body, and His soul and divinity. But theologians observe that all these things are not there for the same reason, or in the same manner; but some are in this Sacrament by virtue and efficacy of the words of consecration, others by way of concomitance or accompaniment. That is said to be in this Sacrament by virtue and efficacy of the words, which is signified and set forth by those very words of the form of consecration. And, taken in this way, there is not in the host anything more than the body of Christ, nor in the chalice anything more than the blood, because the words effect what they signify, and this is all that they signify: *This is My body; This is My blood.* Those things are said to be present by way of concomitance or accompaniment which are united and in company with that which is expressed and declared by the words. And since the body of Christ is not now alone, but is united with the blood and the soul and the divinity, therefore all these things also are there together in the host. And since the blood in like manner is not now by itself alone, but is united with the body and with the soul and divinity, therefore all those things are likewise in the chalice. That may be well understood by the following consideration. Divines say that, if during the three days that Christ was in the tomb St. Peter or any other of the apostles had consecrated, there would not have been in that Holy Sacrament the soul of Christ, because then the soul was not united with the body, but there would have been only the dead body, as it was in the sepulcher, although united with the divinity, because that

never left it. In like manner, when Christ consecrated at the Supper on Holy Thursday, there was in the Sacrament Christ our Redeemer, true God and true man, but passible and mortal, as He then was; but now He is in the Sacrament alive, glorious and risen again, immortal and impassible as He is in heaven.

But though it is true that in the host there is the blood, and in the chalice the body of Christ our Redeemer, it is fitting none the less that the two consecrations be made separately, each by itself, for the more lively representation of the Passion and death of Christ, in which the blood was separated from the body; and thus mention of that fact is made in the words of consecration of the chalice: *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur*. Also, inasmuch as this sacrament was instituted for the nourishment and sustenance of our souls, it was fitting that it should be instituted not only as meat, but also as drink, since the perfect nourishment of the body consists of those two things. But we may draw one conclusion from this for the comfort of those who are not priests. It is that, though they do not communicate under both kinds, as they do who say Mass, but only under the species of bread—and that for many very grave reasons which the Church has found for the practice—yet in receiving in the host the body of Christ our Redeemer, they receive likewise His blood and His soul and divinity, because He is whole, entire, and perfect under each of the two species. And theologians and saints say that they receive as much grace as priests who communicate under both species, provided they approach with equal dispositions. St. Hilary says that as in the manna, which was the figure of this Most Holy Sacrament, neither he who gathered more found that he had more for that, nor he who gathered less that he had less for that, as Holy Scripture assures us (Exod. xvi. 18); so also in this Divine Sacrament neither he who receives under the species of bread and wine receives more for that, nor he who receives only

under the species of bread receives less for that. All are equal in this particular.

Moreover, there is another great wonder in this Most High Sacrament. It is that not only is Christ whole and entire in the whole host, and whole and entire in the chalice; but in every particle of the host and in every drop of the species of wine, there is also the whole Christ, as entire as He is in the whole host and as entire as He is in heaven, however small the particle be. This is also gathered clearly from the Gospel itself; for Christ our Lord did not consecrate separately and by itself each mouthful of those with which He communicated His apostles, but He consecrated at once a certain quantity of bread, which when divided should be enough to give Communion to them all. And so of the chalice the holy Gospel says expressly that Christ gave it to His apostles, saying: *Take and divide it among you* (Luke xxii. 17). And not only when the host or the blood is divided, but also before the division, there is the body of Christ whole and entire in the whole host, and whole and entire in every part of it, and whole and entire in the whole species of wine, and whole and entire in every drop of the same. There are some examples and comparisons here in Nature that may serve to throw some light on this matter. Our soul, too, is whole in the whole body and whole in every part of it. My speaking voice, which is the example alleged by St. Augustine, is the whole in your ears and whole in those of all who hear me. And if you take a mirror, you will see in it your figure whole and entire, although the mirror be small, and much smaller than you. And if you divide the mirror into many parts, you will also see your figure in each part, neither more nor less than you saw it in the entire mirror. These and the like examples and comparisons are brought up by doctors and saints to illustrate these mysteries for us; and while in none of them is the comparison perfect, yet they all serve to throw light.

There is also here another mystery, that, when the host and the blood are parted and divided, the accidents of bread and wine are what is there parted and divided; but Christ is neither parted nor divided, but remains entire in every particle, however small it be. And in like manner when you divide the host in your mouth, you do not divide or diminish Christ. St. Jerome says: "What a deception and illusion of our senses! It looks as though we divide and break Thee up as we do the material bread that we eat; but the truth is that we do not break or divide Thee in our mouths, but only the accidents which we see; but Thou, O Lord, remainest perfect and entire in every particle, without alteration or division, and we receive Thee entire." So the Church sings in the "Lauda, Sion":

*Not a single doubt retain,
When they break the Host in twain,
But that in each part remain
What was in the whole before;
Since the simple sign alone
Suffers change in state or form,
The Signified remaining one.*

There happens to us in this banquet the opposite of what happens in earthly feasts, in which you cut an article of food, but not the plates or containing vessel; but at this divine table it is not so: the plate and containing vessel, which are the accidents, are divided, and the food and nourishment remain entire. Moreover, at other tables you eat the meat and the food, but you do not eat the containing vessels nor the plates; but at this sovereign table we eat the food, and it is so much to our taste that we eat the plate with it.

All these things that faith teaches us we must be content for the present to believe and venerate without seeking to scrutinize them curiously. We must go ever upon this fundamental principle laid down by St. Augustine: "Let us

allow that God can do something which we must confess that we cannot search into"—*Demus aliquid Deum posse quod nos fateamur illud investigare non posse*. As the saints well say, the things of God would not be great if our understanding and reason were able to comprehend them (A Kempis, iv. 18). Thus it is the merit of faith to believe what we do not see. And there is something even special about the mysteries of this Most Holy Sacrament, which there is not in the other mysteries of faith; that in the others we believe what we do not see—a praiseworthy thing certainly: *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed* (John xx. 29)—but in this we have not only to believe what we do not see, but contrary to what it seems we do see, because to our senses it seems that there is bread and wine here, and we have to believe that there is not.

The faith that we hold about this mystery is like to that which Abraham had, whom St. Paul so much extols, who "hoped against all hope"—*contra spem in spem credidit* (Rom. iv. 18). Supernatural hope overcame the natural distrust which came of what his eyes saw. He believed and hoped that he should have a son, contrary to all that natural hope could promise him, for naturally that could not be, since he and his wife were far advanced in years. And afterwards, when he was ready to sacrifice this son as God had commanded him, he still believed that the Lord must surely fulfil the promise that He had made of multiplying his posterity through that very son. So in this Divine Sacrament we believe the contrary of what all our senses naturally tell us, and thus our belief is highly meritorious. God said to His people: *In the morning ye shall eat bread, and in the evening I will give you flesh* (Exod. xvi. 12). The morning is this present life: God gives Himself to us under the appearance of bread and wine; but at evening-tide, whereby is signified the glory of heaven, you shall see the flesh of Christ and understand clearly how and in what manner it is there; the veil shall drop, the cur-

tains shall rise, and we shall see all these things clearly.

Many and well authenticated are the miracles that we might allege in confirmation of what we have said. Writings of the saints and histories are full of them; but I mean to quote only one, which is related in the chronicle of the Order of St. Jerome. A religious named Friar Peter de Cavañuelas, who was afterwards Prior of Guadalupe, was much assailed by temptations against faith, especially regarding the Holy Sacrament of the altar; his thought kept saying to him, how could it be that there was blood in the host. The Lord vouchsafed to deliver him from this temptation in a wonderful manner, which was that, when he was saying one Saturday the Mass of our Lady, after he had consecrated, and was bowing down to say the prayer which begins *Supplices te rogamus*, he saw a cloud descending from on high and enveloping the whole altar where he was saying Mass, so that he could see neither host nor chalice for the darkness of the cloud. He was much frightened at this occurrence and full of great terror at the sight which met his eyes. So he begged the Lord with many tears to be pleased to deliver him from this danger and show why it had happened. While he was thus in tears and great alarm, little by little the cloud disappeared, and the altar stood out entire. And looking at the altar, he saw that the consecrated host was gone, and the chalice was uncovered and empty, because the blood also had been taken away from it. So great was his astonishment and fear at this sight that he was like a dead man; and, coming to himself, he began with great grief of heart, and shedding many tears from his eyes, to ask once more our Lord, and his most holy Mother whose Mass he was saying, to forgive him if this had happened through any fault of his, and deliver and draw him out of so great a danger. While he was in this perplexity, he saw the host coming in the air, resting on a paten shining with light, and placing itself over the mouth of the chalice; and thereupon there began

to ooze out of it drops of blood, and trickle down within the chalice, and the quantity that came out was the same as that which had been there before. And when the blood had ceased flowing, the pall or fold of the corporal came to put itself once more over the chalice, and the host came to be in its place on the altar as it was before. The priest stood amazed to see such great mysteries; and, not knowing what to do, he heard a voice saying to him: "Finish thy duty, and let all that thou hast seen be kept secret;" and from that time onward he never felt the temptation any more. The acolyte, or server, who served the Mass, saw none of these things, nor heard he the voice, but noticed the priest's tears and how he took much longer over the Mass than usual. All the above narrative was found after his death in a paper written with his own hand, folded in his general confession, which he did as a sign of the secret which he had been bidden to keep.

CHAPTER III

*Here Begins the Discourse on the Preparation Which the
Excellence and Dignity of the Divine
Sacrament Requires*

THIS Divine Sacrament has this superiority over all the rest, that there is in it really and truly Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man; and for this reason it is the most excellent of the sacraments and that which works the greatest effects of grace in our souls. In other sacraments we partake of the grace that is communicated to us there, but in this we partake of the very fountain of grace. In other sacraments we drink, as it were, from a stream flowing from the fountain, but in this we drink of the fountain itself, since we receive Christ Himself, true God and true man. And so this Sacrament is called *Eucharistia*, which signifies *Good grace*, because every good gift

of grace, and the source of it all, is there; as also because therein is given to us the Son of God Himself, Who truly is called a *Grace* and a *Gift* given to the human race in the mystery of the Incarnation. It is also called *Communion*, in accordance with what St. Luke says of the faithful, that *they were persevering in the communion of the breaking of bread* (Acts ii. 42); for in receiving this Most Holy Sacrament we partake of the highest and greatest good that there is, which is God, and with Him of all spiritual good gifts and graces. In giving us His flesh and blood He makes us partakers of all those treasures which He has earned for us by that sacred flesh and blood. Another reason why it is called Communion is because it unites the faithful one with another, all sitting at the same table and receiving the same food. Thus we communicate and share together, and are conjoined so as to make one reality, at least in faith and religion, and we are all one body, as St. Paul says: *We are all one bread, one body, we who partake of one and the same bread* (I Cor. x. 17). And so St. Augustine says that Christ instituted this Sacrament under the species of bread and wine to signify that, as bread is made of many grains of wheat, united together, and wine of many grains of grapes, so of many faithful who communicate and partake of this Sacrament there is made one mystical body.

St. John Damascene likens this Most Holy Sacrament to that fiery coal wherewith one of the seraphim purified the lips of the Prophet Isaias and took away all his imperfections. So, he says, this heavenly food, by being united with the divinity, which is *a consuming fire* (Deut. iv. 24), consumes and cleanses away all our imperfections and ailments and fills us with spiritual gifts and good things. Lastly, this is that banquet spoken of in the Gospel, in which God bids the guests to be told: *I have prepared my banquet, my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready* (Matt. xxii. 4). In saying that all things are

ready and prepared, He gives us to understand that here in this sacred banquet we have all things that could be desired. So the Prophet David said of this food: *Thou hast prepared, O God, in thy sweetness for the poor* (Psalm lxvii. 11). He does not say what it is that He has prepared, because the good that is herein contained is so great that no words can express it.

With good reason, then, does the Church exclaim: "O sacred banquet, in which we receive God"—*O sacrum convivium, in quo Christus sumitur*. That very name of banquet tells of the joy and satisfaction and abundance and plenty that there is in it. "O sacred banquet, in which the memory of the Passion is renewed," the memory of that excess of love wherewith God has loved us, giving Himself up for us unto death, even the death of the Cross! O sacred banquet, wherein our soul is sated and made full of grace! O sacred banquet, wherein there is given us a pledge of glory!—and such a pledge as to be nowise distinct from that which is to be given us hereafter, as is the usual case of pledges given on earth; but one and the same God, Who is to be our recompense and reward, gives Himself for pledge in this sovereign banquet, save only that here they serve Him up to us in a covered dish, whereas in that banquet and supper of heavenly glory they will serve Him to us in a dish uncovered.

But the excellence of so high a Sacrament, and the great majesty of the Lord Whom we are to receive, require that the disposition and preparation for it be very great. The Royal Prophet, speaking of the building of the Temple of Jerusalem, says: *It is a great work, for we are not about building a dwelling place for man, but for God* (I Chron. xxix. 1). And when he had got together a great quantity of gold, silver, vessels, and precious stones, it all seemed to him nothing. What, then, should be the preparation of the temple and dwelling in which we are to receive God Himself in person, Who must be greater by as much as the

typified exceeds the type, and the living the painted figure!

Apart from what is due to the majesty of so great a Lord, it likewise very much concerns ourselves to come well prepared to receive this Most Holy Sacrament; for according to the preparation and disposition that we bring will be the grace that we receive, as he who draws water from a spring draws more the larger the vessel that he brings. And for the better understanding of what we wish to say on this point, theologians here observe that not only will there be greater grace received for the greater merit of acts and good works which one brings to the reception of this Sacrament, which is called in the language of the Council of Trent grace *ex opere operantis*, but also, apart from that, the grace which the Sacrament gives of itself by divine privilege and institution, which they call grace *ex opere operato*, will be greater in proportion to the better disposition wherewith we approach the Sacrament. For God works in the order of grace as He does in the order of nature. In the natural order we see that all things work according to the dispositions they find in the subject matter they work upon. Thus fire is quickly kindled of dry wood; but if the wood is not dry, it will light more slowly, and so according to the degrees of dryness will be the working of the fire. So it is also in this Divine Sacrament, and thus in every way it concerns us much to come to it well prepared.

CHAPTER IV

*Of the Cleanness and Purity, Not Only from Mortal Sins,
but Also from Venial Sins and Imperfections, with
Which We Should Approach Holy Communion*

WE will speak of three chief things: first, of the disposition and preparation required to approach and receive this Divine Sacrament; secondly, of what we ought

to do after receiving it and of what our thanksgiving should be; thirdly, of the fruit and profit which we should gather from Holy Communion. And to begin with the first, the disposition and preparation required for this are much greater than what is required for the other sacraments; since the greater the excellence of sacraments, the greater the preparation and purity needed to receive them. Thus some sacraments there are for the worthy reception of which it is enough to have sorrow and true repentance for our sins, without its being necessary to go to confession; but this Divine Sacrament is of such dignity and excellence, on account of God Himself being contained in it, that over and above what has been said it requires another sacrament by way of disposition, which is the sacrament of confession, when there has been any mortal sin going before. Thus it is not enough to approach with sorrow and contrition, but confession must precede, as has been ruled by the Council of Trent (Sess. xiii. Cap. 7), according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Let a man prove himself, and so eat of this bread and drink of this chalice* (I Cor. xi. 28). The Council of Trent thus explains these words, that it is necessary for a man to come proved and examined by the examination and judgment of confession. This disposition and preparation is necessary for all Christians, under pain of mortal sin; and it is disposition enough to receive grace in the Sacrament.

But though it is true that for venial sins and other faults and imperfections not amounting to mortal sin, a man does not entirely lose the fruit of this Most Holy Sacrament, but receives an increase of grace, as theologians say; yet he does lose that copious and abundant fruit of graces and virtues and other admirable effects which the Sacrament is apt to work in purer and more devout souls. For, though venial sins do not extinguish charity, they deaden fervor and diminish that devotion which is the most proper disposition required for this Divine Sacrament. And thus, if we

wish to have a share in that abundant fruit which they are wont to enjoy who come to Communion as they ought, it is necessary to come pure, not only from mortal sins, but also from venial sins. Jesus Christ Himself taught us this disposition by the example He gave of washing the feet of His disciples before giving them Communion, giving us to understand, as St. Bernard says, the cleanness and purity with which we ought to approach this Most Holy Sacrament, cleanness not only from mortal sins, but also from venial sins, which are the dust that is wont to gather on the feet. St. Denis the Areopagite says that by giving us this example of washing their feet our Lord requires extreme cleanness, not only from venial sins, but also from other faults and imperfections. He brings in to this purpose the ceremony that the Church practises in the Mass, of the priest washing his hands before offering the Holy Sacrifice. He well observes that he does not wash his whole hands, but only the tips of his fingers, to signify that we should not only be free from grievous sins, but also from lighter sins and from faults and imperfections. If Nabuchodonosor commanded that they should choose out children *in whom there was no blemish* (Dan. i. 4), pure, clean, and beautiful, to give them of the delicacies of his table and nourish them of the same, how much greater reason must there be that, to approach this divine and royal table, we should come with great cleanness and purity! In short, it is the bread of angels, and we should approach it with the purity of angels.

Peter of Cluny tells of a priest, in that part of Germany which is called Thuringia, that, whereas he had at first been a man of good and holy life, he came afterwards to fall miserably into a certain sin of impurity; and then adding sin to sin he dared to approach the altar and say Mass without amendment or confession—a usual mistake of some who, having led a good life, then when something shameful befalls them dare not confess it, nor yet give over Com-

munion, not to lose the good opinion and credit they had before, pride so blinding them. God was pleased to chastise him affectionately as a father by doing something to open his eyes. It was this. At the time of receiving, holding Christ in his hands, the host disappeared from them, and in like manner the blood disappeared from the chalice, leaving the priest that day without Communion and not a little terrified. The same thing happened to him two other times on which he was minded to come again and say Mass, to see whether the Lord would give him the same token of indignation against him as before. Thereupon he recognized how great were his sins and with what good ground the anger of God was roused against him. His eyes filled with tears, he went to throw himself at the feet of his bishop, and with great sentiments of grief related to him what had happened, confessed and received at his hands the penance that he deserved in the way of fasts, disciplines, and other austerities, wherein he occupied himself a long time without daring to come back to celebrate, until his prelate and pastor came to command or give him leave to do so when it seemed that he had made sufficient satisfaction to God for his sins. Then a marvel came about at the first Mass that he said. After having said the greater part of it with extreme compunction and tears, as he was going to receive, suddenly there appeared to him overhead the three hosts which for his unworthiness had formerly disappeared; and in the chalice he found all that corresponding quantity of blood; by this so evident token the Lord wished to show him that his sins were forgiven. He was full of gratitude for this mercy of the Lord, and with much joy received likewise the three hosts, and from that time forth persevered in a very perfect life. Such is the story, says Peter of Cluny, that the bishop of Clermont related to him in presence of a large company. Caesarius in his Dialogues recounts another instance not unlike it.

CHAPTER V

*Of a More Particular Disposition and Preparation Where-
with We Should Approach This Divine Sacrament*

TO enjoy completely the admirable fruits which this Divine Sacrament carries with it, the saints and masters of spiritual life say that we should endeavor to prepare for it by another more particular disposition, which is actual devotion. So we will declare here what this devotion ought to be and how we are to awaken it in ourselves. We must approach Holy Communion, they say, first, with the greatest humility and reverence; secondly, with the greatest love and confidence; thirdly, with great hunger and desire of this heavenly bread. To these three things may be reduced all the varieties of sentiments with which we may awaken actual devotion, as well before receiving this Holy Sacrament, as also at the time of Communion, and likewise after Communion. There are books full of considerations to this purpose, very good and very well drawn out. We will here only touch upon some of the most ordinary, which are often the most profitable, opening the way so that upon this foundation each may enlarge the subject for himself; for that method will be more moving and more profitable, according to the doctrine that we have in the Book of the Spiritual Exercises.

In the first place, we are to approach this Most Holy Sacrament with very great humility and reverence, which will be awakened in our soul by the consideration on the one hand of the sovereign majesty and greatness of God, Who is truly and really in this Most Holy Sacrament—the same Lord Who by His mere will created, conserves, and governs the heavens and the earth, and by that same will could annihilate them all; in Whose presence the angels and the highest seraphim fold their wings, tremble and quake with profoundest reverence; on the other hand, turn-

ing thence our eyes upon ourselves, looking at our lowliness and misery. At other times we may approach with the heart of the publican in the Gospel (Luke xviii. 13), who dared not draw nigh to the altar or raise his eyes to heaven, but standing afar off beat his breast with great humility, saying: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner*. At other times we may come with the words of the prodigal son: *Lord, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am not worthy to be called thy son: receive me as one of the hired servants of thy house* (Luke xv. 18-19). At other times, with those words of St. Elizabeth: *Whence is this to me?* (Luke i. 43), as we have said above. It will also be very well to consider attentively those words which the Church has made an institution for the time of Communion: *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof, but speak only the word, and my soul shall be healed* (Matt. viii. 8). Lord, I am not worthy, but I come to this intent that Thou mayest make me worthy. Lord, I am weak and infirm, but for this I come that Thou mayest heal and strengthen me; for, as Thou hast said: *They who are well have no need of a physician, but they who are sick* (Matt. ix. 12), and it is for them especially that Thou hast come.

Eusebuis, writing of the death of St. Jerome, at which he was present, being his disciple, says that, when he was on the point of receiving this Most Holy Sacrament, he broke out into exclamations of wonder, on the one hand, at the majesty and goodness of the Lord, and on the other hand turning his eyes upon himself, he said: "How dost Thou, O Lord, now humble Thyself so much as to wish to come and descend to a man who is a publican and a sinner, and not only to eat with him, but to bid Thyself be eaten by him!" In the Second Book of Kings Holy Scripture relates that David said to Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan: *Thou shalt eat bread at my table*. He answered: *Who am I that thou shouldst set eyes on me, who am but as a dead dog!* (II Kings iv. 7-8). If Mephibosheth said this on being

invited to the table of a king, what might a man well say on being invited to the table of God! Now since we cannot approach this Divine Sacrament with the disposition it deserves, let us make up for it by humility and reverence, and say with the Royal Prophet and with holy Job: *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou dost visit him* (Psalm viii. 5; Job vii. 17), and magnify and honor him so much! With reason does the Church express her wonder and sing: "O wonderful thing! A poor lowly servant receives in his mouth and in his breast his God and Lord"—*O res mirabilis! Manducat Dominum pauper, servus, et humilis.*

In the second place, we should approach this Most Holy Sacrament with the utmost love and confidence; and to awaken that sentiment in us, we should consider the infinite goodness and mercy and love of the Lord, which shines forth so brilliantly here. Who, then, will not love One Who has done so much for us! What will He not give us, Who gives us Himself! St. Chrysostom says very well: "What shepherd feeds his sheep with his own blood! And why speak of shepherds? Many mothers there are who, after the labors of childbirth, hand over their children to other women to nurse and rear. But His love would not suffer that, but He nourishes us with His own blood, and unites us with Himself, and raises us and ennobles us and in every way makes us grow."

The third thing that this Most Holy Sacrament requires is that we should come to it with great hunger and desire. "This bread," says St. Augustine, "requires hunger of the inner man." As bodily food then seems to be doing us good when it is eaten with hunger, so also this divine food will do us great good if the soul goes to it with great hunger, desiring to unite herself with God and to obtain some particular gift and favor. *He hath filled the hungry soul with good things* (Psalm cvi. 9). And the same said the most holy Queen of Angels in her Canticle. To excite this

hunger and desire in our souls, it will help us much to consider on the one hand our great need, and on the other the wonderful effects that this Most Holy Sacrament works. When Christ our Redeemer walked this earth, He healed the infirmities of all who approached Him, and we do not read of anyone's ever asking for a cure and meeting a refusal. The woman suffering from a flux of blood approached Him, touched the hem of His garment, and was cured at once. The sinful woman in the Gospel threw herself at His feet and was pardoned (Luke vii. 37-48). There came to Him lepers, and they were cleansed; there came to Him possessed persons, the blind, the palsied, and all were made whole and sound, *because virtue went out of him and healed all* (Luke vi. 19). So also will He work in this Most Holy Sacrament if we approach with this hunger and desire, for He is the same now as then, and has not changed His nature.

CHAPTER VI

Other Considerations and Modes of Preparation, Very Useful for Holy Communion

AMONG other considerations wherewith we may prepare ourselves for Holy Communion, a very proper one is the memory of the Passion, considering the immense love wherewith the Son of God offered Himself for us on the Cross. For one of the chief reasons why Christ our Redeemer instituted this Divine Sacrament was that we might have an ever-living memorial of His Passion; and so He bade us remember it every time we celebrated. *Do this in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19). And the glorious Apostle St. Paul repeats the same to us: *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shall show forth the death of the Lord* (I Cor. xi. 26). And so St. Bonaventure strongly advised this devotion, that every time we go to

Communion we should reflect upon some stage of the Passion; and he says that he made use of this practice himself and that thereby his soul melted away in love of God.

The blessed St. Chrysostom says that he who goes to Communion should make account that every time he communicates he puts his mouth to that precious wound in the side of Christ and sucks His blood, partaking of all that by that blood He has won for us. St. Catherine of Siena, every time that she communicated, made account that she went as she did when she was an infant to the breast of her mother. Others, considering how this Sovereign Sacrament is a memorial of the Passion of Christ, imagine Christ crucified and make a Calvary of their heart, and plant there the Lord's Cross, and embracing it gather in their mouths the drops of blood that fall from thence. Others make account that they find themselves at the supper at which Christ our Redeemer supped with His disciples on the night of His Passion, as though they were seated there with the apostles, and received at His hand His holy body and blood. And this is no mere study and representation of that supper, but in sober truth it is the selfsame supper and the selfsame banquet; and the selfsame Lord, Who then gave His body to His apostles, the same now gives it to us, by the ministry of His priests, with the same love wherewith He then gave it.

It is also a very good preparation to exercise ourselves in the consideration of the following points. First, who is the Lord that is coming? He is the Creator of all things, King and Lord of heaven and earth, God of infinite majesty and perfection. Secondly, to whom is He coming; that is, to me, who am dust and ashes and have many times offended Him. Thirdly, for what end is He coming; that is, to communicate to me the fruit of His Passion and the most precious gifts of His grace. Fourthly, what moves Him to come; that is, not for any interest of His own, since He is Lord of all things and has need of nothing, but

out of pure love and desire of the salvation of my soul, that it may be ever accompanied by His grace. Fifthly, to exercise oneself in acts of the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity.

And since we cannot worthily prepare ourselves to receive the Lord unless He gives it to us so to do, we must beg Him to prepare and trim our soul with humility, purity, love, and reverence as befitting, alleging to that end that common plea: Lord, if a rich and powerful king were to seek lodging in the house of a poor widow, he could not expect her to furnish the place for him to repose in, but would send beforehand his furniture and servants to put it in order. Do so, then, Thou, O Lord, with my soul, since Thou art coming to lodge therein; send Thy furniture before Thee, and Thy angels to adorn and put it in fitting order to receive such a Lord and such a Spouse, according to that saying of the Apocalypse: *I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, adorned for God* [ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ] *as a spouse dressed for her bridegroom* (Apoc. xxi. 2). Then turning to the sovereign Virgin and to the saints for whom we have special devotion, let us humbly beg of them to secure the fulfilment of this petition.

Besides these preparations, we will add here another very easy one, very useful, and very consoling. When you fail to attain that fervor and those inflamed desires which you wish, and which it were reasonable you should have to receive so great a Lord, practise yourself in conceiving a great will and desire of conceiving such desires, and thereby you shall supply what is wanting to you; for God beholds the heart, and will receive and accept what you desire to feel as though you actually felt it, according to the saying of the prophet: *God hath heard the desire of the poor: his ear hath heard the preparedness of their heart* (Psalm ix. 14). Blossius says that God taught this devotion and mode of preparation to St. Mechtildis. The Lord said to her one time: When thou art to receive Holy Communion, desire to

the glory of My name to feel all the desire and love wherewith the most inflamed heart ever burned to unite itself with Me, and in that way thou mayest approach Me, since I will set My eyes on that love and take it as thou desirest to feel it. The same is read of St. Gertrude. One day that this saint was preparing to receive the Most Holy Sacrament, she was much pained at not being so well prepared as she could wish, and begged the glorious Virgin Mary and all the saints to offer to God for her all the preparation and merits with which any one of them any day had been prepared to receive Him; whereupon the Lord said to her: "Actually before the courtiers of heaven thou appearest with that preparation thou hast asked for." Thus it will be a very good disposition and preparation to desire to receive this Most Holy Sacrament with that fervor and love wherewith the greatest saints approached it, and to desire and beg the Lord that whatever is wanting to us, He may supply by the merits and virtues of Jesus Christ and His saints. We may make use of the same method for our thanksgiving, as we shall presently say; and in the treatise On Prayer we mentioned this method of supplying for our defects.

With these and the like considerations we should awaken in ourselves that actual devotion wherewith the saints say we should approach Holy Communion, sometimes using one, sometimes another, as each shall find it best. But it is to be observed that to prepare ourselves in this manner, and do the part that we ought, it is necessary to take some time to spend thereon. Our Father Francis Borgia, in the treatise he composed on Preparation for Holy Communion, assigns three days for preparation and three days afterwards for thanksgiving, and gives many considerations and exercises to occupy one for those three days. And it would be a very good means to live all the week, and all one's life, in devout recollection; partly in expectation of receiving so great a Lord, partly in memory of the benefit

received. For the mere thought, "Tomorrow I am to go to Communion," or the remembrance, "Today or yesterday I went to Communion," is enough to move the mind to recollection. But if the time that we take for this preparation be not so much as that, at least it may be expected that on a Communion morning we should spend our meditation, or part of it, in one or other of the aforesaid considerations. And it will be a great help the night before Communion, when we are going to bed, to have some care or thought to the effect that "tomorrow I am going to Communion," and as often as we awake in the night, to let it be with the same thought. For if for our daily meditation our holy Father requires this in the Additions which he gives to help the same, with how much more reason may we do it for the day on which we are to receive so august a Sacrament?

CHAPTER VII

What We Are to Do After Having Received the Divine Sacrament, and What Should Be Our Thanksgiving

AS some bodily exercise is generally useful before dinner to revive the bodily heat, so it is useful before Communion to take some exercise in the way of meditation or consideration to revive the heat of the soul, which consists of devotion and love, whereof we have already spoken. In like manner after dinner it is a wholesome practice to spend a little time in good conversation, and the same will hold good after this divine refection, and of that we will treat now. That is the best time to do our business with God and embrace Him within our heart. It is reasonable that we should know how to make the most of it, and not let one particle of so good a time slip by in vain, according to the advice of the Wise Man: *Be not cheated out of a good time, and let not a particle of a good gift escape thee* (Ecclus.

xiv. 14). As for how to spend this time, it should be in the like considerations and sentiments as those which we have mentioned as proper to go before Holy Communion.

Particularly we ought to occupy ourselves, first, in acts of praise and thanksgiving for benefits received, especially for the inestimable benefit of our redemption, and for the favor that the Lord does us here in giving Himself to us and entering into our breasts. And since we have neither the knowledge nor the power to render due thanks for such a high favor, to make up our insufficiency we should offer to the Lord all the thanks and praises that have been given and are being given Him by all the seraphim and choirs of angels from the beginning of the world, and by all the blessed saints while they lived in the world, and chiefly now what they offer in the glory of heaven, and what they are to give Him for all eternity, and join our voices with theirs, desiring to praise Him with the hearts and tongues of all, and inviting all creatures to help us thereto. *Magnify the Lord with me, and let us all exalt His name together* (Psalm xxxiii. 4). And because all this does not come up to what is due God, "since He is above all praise"—*quia maior omni laude*, we should seek to be glad and rejoice at His loving and praising of Himself, since He alone can love and praise Himself sufficiently.

Secondly, we should occupy the time in acts of love of God, since those holy aspirations are nothing else than so many loving acts and heartfelt desires of that sovereign good, such as those of the prophet when he said: *I will love thee, Lord, my strength* (Psalm xvii. 1); *As the hart, wounded by the hunters, seeks after the fountains of water, so my soul, wounded by love, seeks after Thee, O Lord* (Psalm xli. 2).

Thirdly, we should occupy this time in petitions, for it is a very proper time for dispatching our affairs and obtaining favors from God. Holy Scripture relates of Queen Esther that she would not disclose her petition to King

Ashuerus, but simply asked him to be her guest, and said that she would disclose it then. It was done accordingly, and she there obtained all her request. So here in this banquet, where the King of Kings is our guest or, rather, we are His, we shall gain all our requests, since *we come on a good day* (I Kings xxv. 8), and at a happy conjuncture. We may say what Jacob, wrestling with God, said: *I will not let Thee go till Thou hast blessed me* (Gen. xxxii. 26). When Thou didst enter into the house of Zachary, Thou didst say: Today salvation hath come to this house (Luke xix. 9); say as much again, Lord, of this house which Thou hast entered; *say to my soul, I am thy salvation* (Psalm xxxiv. 3). Here we should beg of God pardon of our sins, strength to overcome our passions and resist temptations, grace to acquire virtues, humility, obedience, patience, perseverance. And one should not only ask for oneself but pray to God for the needs of the Church, general and particular, for the pope, for the king, and for all rulers of the Christian commonwealth, spiritual and temporal, and for such other persons in particular as one has any special tie to, whether of duty or of devotion, as we do in the Memento of the Mass.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Other Methods of Thanksgiving

OTHERS make their thanksgiving after Holy Communion in the following manner. They imagine and consider Christ our Lord within their breast as on a cushioned seat or faldstool, and call upon all their powers and senses to recognize and reverence Him for their King and Lord, in the way that in the world, when a man entertains in his house a person of high degree, he is wont to call all his sons and relations to reverence and recognize him. And with each of their senses and powers they do three things: first,

to give Him thanks for His having given this power or sense; secondly, they accuse themselves and are sorry for not having employed it to the end for which the Lord gave it; thirdly, they ask favor and grace to amend their ways from henceforth. This is a very good and useful method of thanksgiving; in fact it is the first method of prayer of the three which our Father sets down in his Book of Spiritual Exercises.

Others imagine themselves afflicted with disease in all their senses and powers, and Christ as a physician who "cures all infirmities"—*qui sanat omnes infirmitates tuas* (Psalm cii. 3). They bring Him round to them, as a physician is brought round to cases of illness; and beg Him, *Come and see, O Lord* (John xi. 34); come and see my sick eyes, this tongue, and so forth, and have compassion on me and heal me. *Have pity on me, O Lord, because I am ailing: heal my soul, because I have sinned against Thee* (Psalm vi. 3; xl. 5).

Let it be here observed that, to go through these exercises and others like them at this time, it is not necessary to make a fictitious composition of place, or seek anything outside of ourselves, since we have present within our breast Jesus Christ Himself, true God and true man, Who is really within us all the time that the sacramental species last; that is, all the time that the substance of bread would last, if it were there. Now, if looking at a figure of Christ serves to make us recollect ourselves for prayer, what must it be to look upon Christ Himself, Who is there present, not in figure, as in the crucifix, but in His own person? Thus everyone should turn to look within himself, considering Christ within him, as the most holy Queen of Angels did when she carried Him within her womb, and hold sweet converse there with his Beloved, saying with the spouse: *I have found him whom my soul loveth, I have held him, and will not let him go* (Cant. iii. 4).

To encourage us to stay and spend more time over our

thanksgiving, we shall be helped by a thing that some theologians say; it is that all the time that the sacramental species last and the real presence of Christ in our breast continues, the more we exercise ourselves in these acts, the greater graces we shall receive, not only for the greater merit of the acts, which they call grace *ex opere operantis*, but *ex opere operato*, by the virtue of the Sacrament (Chapter 3).

Hence will be seen how ill they do who let slip this time in which they might gain so much, and after receiving such a guest in their house, turn their backs immediately so that scarcely has He entered in by one door but they go out by the other, breaking off the conversation. If in the society of this world it would be taken for a piece of discourtesy to receive a guest, a person of credit, in one's house, and after receiving him to pay him no attention, what must it be with a guest like this!

Surius relates of the glorious virgin Margaret, daughter of the king of Hungary, that when she was to communicate she lived the day before on bread and water, in reverence for the heavenly food that she was expecting, and spent the whole night in prayer; after Communion she spent all that day in reciting psalms and praying until nightfall, when she took some slight refreshment.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Fruit That We Should Gather from Holy Communion

THE virtues and admirable effects of this Divine Sacrament, declared by the saints, are not only to show us its excellence and the immense love and charity that the Lord bears us, but also to make us fix our eyes and heart upon them to the end that we may gather fruit from Holy Communion; and so we will proceed to mention some of

those fruits. This Divine Sacrament, like all the rest, has one effect which is common to all sacraments, that is, to give grace to him who receives it worthily. It has another effect all its own, which marks it off from the other sacraments; that effect is what theologians call "spiritual refec-tion," which means that it is the sustenance and nourish-ment of the soul, whereby the soul is remade and restored, and gathers strength to resist her passions and embrace virtue. Thus on those words of Christ our Lord: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed* (John vi. 56), the saints commonly say—and the Council of Florence says the same—that all the effects which bodily nourishment works in bodies, this divine food works spiritually in souls. And they say that it was to this end that Christ our Lord chose to institute this Most Holy Sacrament under the appearance of food, that the very appearance under which He instituted it might declare to us its effects and the need that our souls had of it. According to this, as bodily nour-ishment sustains the life of the body and renews its strength, and at a certain age makes it grow, so too this Most Holy Sacrament sustains the spiritual life, restores the powers of the soul, repairs the feebleness of virtue, for-tifies the man against the temptations of the enemy, and makes him grow to his due perfection. This is the bread that *strengtheneth the heart of man* (Psalm ciii. 15), and in the strength of which, like Elias, we are to *journey till we arrive at the mountain of God, Horeb* (III Kings xix. 8).

Bodily food has another property, which is to afford a pleasant taste and relish to him who eats it, and that the more, the better and more costly is the food and the better disposed the palate. So also this divine food not only nour-ishes us, preserves and strengthens us, but also imparts a spiritual relish and sweetness. This accords with what the patriarch Jacob said in those prophetic blessings which he gave to his sons at the hour of his death, announcing what was to be under the law of the Gospel. Coming to his

son Aser, he said: *Aser, his bread shall be fat, and shall afford delight to kings* (Gen. xlix. 20). Christ is this bread, most rich, most sweet, most delicious to the taste. St. Thomas says that so sweet is the taste, so great the relish, that this heavenly bread affords to those who keep their soul's palate clean, that no words can express it, for here spiritual sweetness is tasted in its very fountain, which is Christ our Savior, fountain of all sweetness, and life of all things, Who by means of this Sacrament enters into the soul of the communicant. And frequently this sweetness is so great as not only to refresh the spirit, but also to redound on the body, according to that saying of the prophet: *Mine heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God* (Psalm lxxxiii. 3). Hence it comes about, as St. Bonaventure says, that often a person goes to Holy Communion feeling very feeble and weak, and so great is the joy and consolation that he receives by virtue of this food that he gets up from thence as strong as though he had never felt any weakness at all. An ancient author, Bishop Guimond of Adversa, writes of those ancient monks that, thanks to the great consolation and strength that they felt in Holy Communion, some of them went without any other food, and were sustained by that alone, both body and soul; and the day they did not communicate they felt in themselves such weakness and utter prostration that they thought they should faint and could not live. And he says that for some of them an angel brought Communion to their cell. In the chronicles of the Cistercian Order there is a story of a monk who, every time that he went to Communion, seemed to receive a honeycomb, the sweetness of which lasted for three days.

In accordance with this, the fruit that we should gather from Holy Communion should be a manly courage to journey and go on further in the way of God, with great fortitude to mortify our passions and resist and vanquish temptations, for to that end the Lord has prepared for us

this table. *Thou hast prepared a table in my sight against them that persecute me* (Psalm xxii. 5). At other tables, he who has enemies, fears and dares not be there; but at this, man receives strength and fortitude to overcome all his enemies. And so St. Chrysostom says that we should rise from this holy table like lions, breathing fire, striking terror into the devils. And this effect was signified to us by Christ our Redeemer, when after communicating His disciples He said to them: *Arise, let us go hence* (John xiv. 31), as much as to say: "Now you have communicated, arise, let us go to suffer." And so we see that in the primitive Church, when this Divine Sacrament was so much frequented, not only had Christians strength to keep the law of God, but also to resist the force and fury of their persecutors and give their blood and life for Christ.

CHAPTER X

That the Frequentation of Holy Communion Is a Great Remedy against All Temptations, and Particularly for the Preservation of Chastity

THE saints say that the frequentation of this Divine Sacrament is a great remedy against all temptations because, besides giving great strength, it weakens the passions and evil habits and inclinations, and allays the fire of concupiscence, the origin of all evils, and makes us prompt and ready to fulfil the will of God. St. Thomas says that one of the reasons why this Most Holy Sacrament defends and delivers us from temptations and falls is because it is a memorial of the Passion of Christ. Now it was by the Passion of Christ that the devils were overcome; so when they see in us the body and blood of Christ, they take to flight, while the holy angels accompany and aid us. St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Cyril advise for this reason the frequentation of this Most Holy Sacrament, that the devils

may fly from us. And St. Chrysostom says: If the blood of the lamb, the figure of this Sacrament, put on the doorposts of houses, delivered the inmates from the chastisement and slaughter which the destroying angel was working (Exod. xii. 22-23), how much more will this Divine Sacrament do!

Going into details, the saints say that this is a most efficacious means of overcoming impure temptations and preserving chastity, since it quietens the movements of the flesh, mitigates concupiscence, that fuel of sin, and appeases the ardor and appetite of sensuality as water extinguishes fire. In this way St. Jerome and St. Thomas and other saints explain that text of the Prophet Zachary: *What is the good gift of God, and what the beauty of the Lord, but the wheat of the elect and the wine that beareth virgins?* (Zach. ix. 17). They say that the special virtue and effect of this food is to engender virgins. Bodily nourishment, when it is good, engenders good blood and good humors; so this divine food engenders in us chastity and purity of affections. Hence St. Cyril came to say that this Divine Sacrament not only sanctifies the soul, but the body also, fulfilling what the Church asks for in the Sacrifice of the Mass, *salutem mentis et corporis*. This is the handful of meal, thrown in by Eliseus, that removed the poison that was in the pot, and seasoned the contents for food (IV Kings iv. 41). And as by that woman in the Gospel touching the hem of the Savior's robe, there ceased in her the issue of blood (Luke viii. 44); and by the entry of the Ark into the Jordan the waters were arrested and thrown back and ceased their onward flow (Jos. iii. 16); so, when Christ enters into this body of ours, temptations are arrested and the fiery ardor of concupiscence cools down. With reason do the saints exclaim: "O blessed fruit, engendering chastity and making virgins!" A grave doctor says that there is no means so effectual for being chaste as the devout frequentation of Holy Communion.

Nicephorus Callistus, Gregory of Tours, Nauclerus, and other grave authors relate a wonderful incident that happened in the City of Constantinople. It was this. There was a very ancient custom in the Greek Church of consecrating the most holy body of our Lord in loaves such as are used at table. From these consecrated loaves the people communicated; and if there was any left over in the sacristy, the priests called in some children of the most virtuous of those who attended the school, of whose innocence they could be better assured, and gave them these most holy remnants to receive, fasting. Nicephorus says that this often happened to himself, he being a child under age, getting his education at the church school. Now it happened one day, when the children came who were called in for this purpose, there was among them the son of a Jew, a worker in the glassworks, and he communicated along with the rest. The child in consequence being late and not coming home at the accustomed hour, his father asked him where he had been; he said, at the church of the Christians, and that he had eaten of that strange bread which they gave to their boys. The father flew into a great passion with his son, and without waiting for further explanations took him and threw him into the glass furnace, which was alight, and shut the door of the furnace upon him. The mother, missing her child, seeing that much time had gone by and there was no sign of him, went out to seek him all over the city with great anxieties and solitudes and, not being able to find him or any trace of him, she returned home in deep sorrow, till at the end of three days, being near the furnace, renewing her tears and sighs and tearing her hair, she began to call her boy by his name. He hearing and recognizing his mother's voice, answered from within the furnace where he was, whereupon she broke open the door of the furnace, and saw her son standing in the middle of the fire, so whole and unhurt that the fire had not touched a hair of his head. The child came out,

and when they asked him who had preserved him, he said that a lady clad in purple had come there many times, and with water that she threw kept down the fire, and besides that had brought him food as often as he needed it. When this marvel came to the ears of the Emperor Justinian, he ordered them to baptize the child at once, and the mother, both of whom wished to become Christians. As for the unhappy father, who would not be converted, the emperor ordered him to be fastened on a tree as a parricide, and so he died of hanging. Now what this Most Holy Sacrament wrought in the body of that child who had received it, preserving him unhurt in the midst of the fire, it works spiritually in the souls of those who worthily receive it, defending and preserving them unharmed in the midst of the fire of temptations.

CHAPTER XI

Of the Chief Fruit to Be Gathered from Holy Communion, Which Is Our Union with and Transformation into Christ

ONE of the principal effects and ends for which Christ our Redeemer instituted this Divine Sacrament, or indeed the main end of all, the saints tell us, was to unite us and incorporate us and make us one thing with Himself. As when this Divine Sacrament is consecrated, by virtue of the words of consecration, that which was bread is converted into the substance of Christ, so by virtue of this Holy Communion, he who was man comes to be in a marvelous way spiritually transformed into God. This is what Christ Himself teaches in the holy Gospel: *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: he that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him* (John vi. 56-57). Thus, as food by virtue of the natural heat is converted into the substance of the eater and

becomes one thing with him, so he who eats this bread of angels is united and conjoined and made one thing with Christ, not by Christ converting Himself into the person to whom He gives Himself as sustenance, but by His converting and transforming into Himself him who receives Him, as the Lord Himself said to St. Augustine: "I am the food of the full-grown. Grow and thou shalt eat Me; but I would have thee know that in thy dealing with Me thou shalt not change Me into thyself, as thou dost with thy other food, but thou shalt be changed and transformed into Me"—*Cibus sum grandium. Cresce et manducabis me: nec tu me mutabis in te sicut cibum carnis tue, sed tu mutaberis in me* ("Confessions," x. 10). So St. Thomas says that the effect of this Sacrament is to transform man into God, making him like Him. For if fire, as being such a noble element, converts into itself all that it comes in contact with, first destroying all that is in them contrary to itself, and then communicating to them its own form and perfection, how much more will this abyss of infinite goodness and nobility destroy all the evil that it finds in our souls and make them like to itself!

This is that real and true union of Christ with the communicant, which He wished to signify by those words: *He is in me and I in him* (John vi. 57)—the union which the saints explain by many striking comparisons. But leaving aside this union, and coming rather to practical applications, the fruit that we should endeavor to draw from Holy Communion is spiritually to unite ourselves to Christ and change and transform ourselves into Him. That means making ourselves like Him in life and manners, humble as Christ, patient as Christ, obedient as Christ, chaste and poor as Christ. That is what the Apostle means by these words: *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ* (Rom. xiii. 14). In the consecration the substance of bread is changed into the substance of the body of Christ while the accidents remain entire. In Communion it is the other way about;

the substance of man remains, and the accidents are changed, inasmuch as the man from being proud becomes humble, from incontinent chaste, from passionate patient, and in this manner is transformed into Christ.

St. Cyprian on those words of the prophet: *My cup that inebriateth how goodly it is!* (Psalm xxii. 5), which he understands of this Most Holy Sacrament, says that, as inebriation estranges a man from himself and turns him into another man, so does this Divine Sacrament estrange a man from himself and makes him another, causing him to forget the things of this world and henceforth wholly occupy himself with the things of heaven. How did the disciples at Emmaus become other men after having received this Divine Sacrament! (Luke xxiv. 35). Of doubters they became believers; of timid, strong. So we should come from Holy Communion altered and changed into other men. St. Basil says the same, quoting the words of St. Paul: *That he who liveth should no longer live for himself, but wholly for God* (II Cor. v. 15).

A holy woman, St. Angela of Fuligno, says a thing very solid and spiritual to this effect. Treating of the conditions and signs by which we may know a soul transformed into God, one of them, she says, is when a man desires to be underrated, put down, and flouted by every creature, and that all should believe him worthy of flouts, and none should have compassion on him; and he desires not to live in the heart of any creature, but only with God. And not only does he desire to be accounted a negligible quantity, a nobody, but he takes it for a great honor to be positively run down, so as to be made conformable to Christ our Lord, to follow Whom is a great honor; and says with St. Paul: *Far be it from me to glory save only in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. vi. 14). In this way we should be transformed into Christ, and this is the fruit we ought to gather from Holy Communion.

St. Chrysostom, setting forth the obligation contracted by the reception of so high a Sacrament, says: "When we see ourselves assailed by anger or by any other vice or temptation, let us consider what a great boon has been vouchsafed to us, and let this consideration serve us for a bridle to keep us out of all sin and all imperfection." The tongue that has touched Christ should in all conscience be sanctified, and not talk frivolities or profanities any more. The breast and heart that has received God Himself, and been a sort of pyx to hold the Most Holy Sacrament, should in all conscience not be used for a receptacle of the dung of vain desires, or converse or think now of anything else but God. Here amongst us, when a man eats a lozenge, he breathes all day long the odor of it. You have eaten this divine lozenge which contains heavenly ambergris, the odor of all virtue and Godhead; what in all conscience should be the odor you exhale! We read of a holy virgin that she said: When I go to Communion, all that day I keep my thoughts with extra diligence, imagining the Lord in my heart, as reposing there in His house. Therefore I endeavor to observe all possible modesty, in speech, look, and gait, and in all intercourse with others, like one who puts his finger to his lips, asking them to keep silence and not make a noise, for fear of awakening the sleeper.

CHAPTER XII

Of Another Main Fruit Which We Should Gather from Holy Communion, Which Is to Offer and Resign Ourselves Entirely into the Hands of God; and of the Preparation and Thanksgiving to Be Made Conformably Thereto

ONE of the principal results that we ought to secure from Holy Communion is to resign ourselves and place ourselves entirely in the hands of God, like a little clay in the

hands of the potter, that He may do with us what He wishes, as He wishes and when He wishes, and in what manner He wishes, without excepting or reserving anything. The Son of God offered Himself in sacrifice entirely to His Father, giving for us all His blood and His life; and every day He gives Himself to us as food in this Most Holy Sacrament, His whole self, His body, blood, soul, and divinity; it will only be reasonable that we should offer and deliver ourselves over wholly and entirely to Him. This some say is the proper meaning of *communicating*—to share and share alike, to do with God as He does with you. He gives to you and shares with you all He has; do you give Him all you have.

The same should also be our thanks after Holy Communion. *What shall I render to the Lord for all he hath rendered to me?* (Psalm cxv. 12). What for so many favors and benefits, especially for that which I have just now received? Do you know what He wishes you to offer Him? What we have just been saying all along: *Son, give me thy heart* (Prov. xxiii. 26). That holy man [Thomas À Kempis] puts this very well: "What more do I ask of thee than that thou wouldst make it thy endeavor to resign thyself to Me entirely? Whatever else thou givest Me besides thyself, I care nothing for it, for I seek not thy gift, but thee. As it would not be enough for thee to have all other good things besides Me, so nothing can please Me, whatever thou givest, if thou offer not thyself. Offer thyself to Me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thy offering shall be acceptable" ("Imitation of Christ," iv. 8). St. Augustine says that what displeased God in the sacrifice which Cain offered Him, and the reason why He did not accept the sacrifice at his hands as He did at those of his brother Abel, was because he did not make a fair division with God, since he gave God something of what was his without giving and making over himself—*dans Deo aliquid suum, sibi autem se ipsum*. He says that they do the same

who offer God something else, but offer not their own will. "The kingdom of heaven asks no other price but yourself. It is worth exactly what you are. Give yourself, and you shall have it."

This, then, is the offering and entire resignation of ourselves into the hands of God that should occupy and hold our attention after Holy Communion. And the resignation should not be only in general, but we should break the matter up and descend to particular cases, resigning and conforming ourselves to the will of God as well for sickness as for health, for death as for life, for temptation as for consolation, specifying that for which each one thinks he would feel greater repugnance and difficulty, offering himself for it to the Lord in thanksgiving, leaving out no place, nor office, nor grade, however lowly and abject it be; this should be done until nothing occurs to us for which we do not feel our will quite in conformity and union with that of God. To this end there is a very good and devout prayer put by our Father in the Book of Spiritual Exercises. "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will, all that I have and possess. Thou hast given it to me; to Thee, O Lord, I return it; all is Thine, dispose of it according to Thy entire will. Give me Thy love and Thy grace, for that is enough for me."

Here we should also exercise and put ourselves in action, making acts of various virtues, particularly those we stand most in need of, because all the flavor of anything that anyone needs or requires may be found in this divine manna, *having the flavor of everything delicious to the taste* (Wisdom xvi. 20). It has the flavors of all virtues. Thus one time you can put yourself in action and exercise yourself in one virtue, and another time in another, always keeping an eye on what you most need. If you feel the need of humility, contrive to make it give you the taste of humility, since you will find a good pattern and taste there of

that, seeing the Son of God clad in the accidents of bread, which as being but accidents are more poor and lowly than the swaddling clothes and clouts in which His Mother wrapped Him at Bethlehem. And what greater humility, what deeper abasement, can be imagined than that God should make Himself as food for us to eat Him—that we should spread on that table of the altar there the altar cloths, the corporals as table linen, the paten for a plate, the chalice for a drinking-cup, that we should handle Him with our hands, and receive Him into our mouth and stomach! What greater abasement could there be of God, what greater exaltation of man? In some sort humility shines forth here more than in the work of the Incarnation. Exercise yourself, then, and make acts hereupon until you feel your soul being saturated and soaked through and through. Offer to the Lord in thanksgiving your contempt of all the honor and esteem of the world, and embrace the prospect of being disparaged and held of small account for His love.

It is likewise very good to come down to certain particular and trifling things, and offer them to the Lord in thanksgiving. Everyone knows more or less his own faults, and realizes what is the greatest hindrance to his spiritual advancement and what it is that occasions his most ordinary falls. Let him try at every Communion to sacrifice and offer to God something of that in thanksgiving. You are fond of self-indulgence and your own comforts, and wish nothing to be wanting to you; make an offering to the Lord and mortify yourself in that, today in one thing and another day in another. You are fond of talking and losing time; mortify yourself in that, and offer it to the Lord in another Communion. You are so fond of your own will that, not to encounter a little mortification and trouble, you refuse to give pleasure or do a service to your brothers, and sometimes speak to them in a harsh and disagreeable way; take care to overcome yourself in that, and offer it to the Lord in another Communion. And as we said in treating of

meditation, that it is a good thing to propose in it something to do that very day, so, too, at Communion it will be very good to form a resolution to overcome and mortify yourself in something that very day and offer that mortification to the Lord in thanksgiving. Make account that this is what the Lord asks of you in return for the favors and benefits you have received; that God asks nothing else of us, no other return but that we should amend our lives and correct whatever we know to be displeasing to His Divine Majesty. This is the best thanksgiving that we can make after Communion, and the most agreeable service that we can offer. The three ways of doing things that we have spoken of above may be applied to thanksgiving: the first, by inward acknowledgment of benefits; the second, by extolling and thanking our benefactor in words; the third, by deeds; and this third is the best thanksgiving. This, then, is what we say now. Our whole effort must not go in considerations; good as they may be, deeds are better, and considerations should be made to come to deeds.

I say the same of preparation for Communion. Though this special preparation which we usually make by certain considerations before Communion is very good, and no one ought to omit it, since the reverence of so high a Sacrament requires everyone in this respect also to do his best; yet the best and chiefest preparation must be a good life, and daily improvement in the perfection of our daily actions, so as to approach this Divine Sacrament with greater and more spotless purity, according to that saying of those glorious Fathers and doctors of the Church, Ambrose and Augustine: "Live in such fashion that thou mayest deserve to receive this Most Holy Sacrament daily"—*Sic vive ut quotidie merearis accipere*. So Father Master Avila, in a letter that he wrote on this subject to a person under his direction, says: "The preparation for Holy Communion should be a well-ordered course from week-end to week-end all one's life." He exemplifies this by a saying of a serv-

ant of God who said that he never made any special preparation for Holy Communion, because he did all he could every day. This is a very good preparation, much better than recollecting oneself just for one quarter of an hour after, and remaining as tepid and unmortified and imperfect as before.

This is the principal preparation, and this is the principal thanksgiving, and this must also be the principal fruit that we gather from Holy Communion. As we say of meditation that the principal preparation for it must be the mortification of our passions, recollection of our senses, and custody of our heart, and that this also is the fruit that we should gather from meditation, and the one should aid the other; so also a good and holy life, doing all things to the best of one's power in order to please God, must be the principal preparation for receiving Holy Communion, and also the principal fruit to be gathered from it. One must aid the other, and one Communion must be a preparation for another. And as we say that making a good meditation and drawing profit therefrom does not mean having many consolations and emotions, nor finding many reflections and grand contemplations, but it means a man's coming out from it very humble, patient, detached, and mortified; so also the goodness of a Communion and the fruit of it is not to be measured by the multitude of reflections suggested, however good and holy they may be, nor by sweetnesses and consolations, but by the mortification of the passions and the greater resignation and conformity to the will of God thence ensuing.

Hence follows a most consoling reflection, and it is that it is always in our power to make a good Communion and gather much fruit from it, inasmuch as with the grace of the Lord it is always in our power to offer ourselves and resign ourselves into the hands of God and to mortify and correct ourselves in what we know is displeasing to His Divine Majesty. Do you, then, do that and you will gather

much fruit from Communion; go on every day conquering and mortifying and amending yourself in something. Let the idol of Dagon fall down in presence of the Ark of the Covenant (I Kings v. 3)—that idol of honor, that idol of self-indulgence and seeking after your own comforts, that idol of self-will—let it all fall flat to the ground in reverence to this Lord. Oh, if we made our Communions in this manner, mortifying ourselves and amending ourselves every time in something, no matter how small, how our soul would thrive!

St. Jerome applies to this effect the saying of the Wise Man about the valiant woman: *She hath studied the corners and hidden recesses of her house*—that is the examination and preparation required for approaching this divine table—and *hath not eaten her bread in idleness* (Prov. xxxi. 27), hath not eaten her bread in vain. When one gathers fruit from Holy Communion in the manner that we have said, he does not eat his bread in vain, but what he eats does him good. But woe to him that has eaten this bread in vain for many years, without having overcome himself or mortified one single passion or one evil tendency! He must be very ill, since what he eats does him no good. Let everyone, then, enter into himself and study the corners of his soul, look at the passion or tendency or inclination that does most hurt and creates most disturbance, and go about getting rid of that and mortifying that until he can say with the Apostle: *I live, not I now, but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. ii. 20); words which St. Jerome explains: "I live, not I now; I live no longer, I that formerly lived under the Old Law, I that persecuted the Church; but there lives in me wisdom, fortitude, peace, and all the rest of the virtues; he who has them not, cannot say, *Christ liveth in me.*"

CHAPTER XIII

Seeing that This Divine Sacrament Works Such Wonderful Effects, What Is the Reason Why Some Who Frequent It Do Not Experience Them in Themselves

SOMEONE will ask: Since this Most Holy Sacrament gives so much grace and works so many wonderful effects, what is the reason why many men who frequently say Mass and receive Holy Communion feel in their souls, I do not say merely nothing of that spiritual delight and sweetness of which we were speaking, but, to all appearance, they do not advance in virtue at all, but ever, as the phrase is, "stick in the same rut"? The usual answer with some is to quote the common proverb, that "familiarity breeds contempt." They think that frequentation of Communion is the reason of its not being received with so much preparation and devotion as it might be, and not producing so much fruit. But they are wrong, for that proverb does not hold in spiritual things and dealing with God. Even in dealing with wise and prudent men they say it does not hold; on the contrary, much conversation and familiarity with them is productive of greater esteem and reverence; the more one associates with them, the more he knows their prudence and virtue and so esteems them the more. But granting that the saying holds as regards the wise men of the world—for, after all, in this wretched life none can be so perfect as not to have some faults, and they come out in the course of much dealing and familiarity with them, so that great familiarity there may be a cause of a falling off of good opinion and esteem—yet in familiar dealing with God that cannot have place. He is a Lord of such infinite perfection and wisdom, that the more one deals with Him and knows Him, the more one reverences Him, as we see in the holy angels and blessed spirits, who know God most perfectly in heaven and converse familiarly with

Him; and the same also holds of our experience here on earth, since the more a man converses with God in prayer, the greater his reverence for Him and the idea that he has of Him.

Holy Writ shows us this clearly in the account of the Samaritan woman, who first treated Christ as one of the people: *How canst thou, being a Jew, ask drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?* (John iv. 9). She calls Him by the common name of His nation; but a little further on in the conversation she calls Him "lord": *Lord, give me this water.* And still a little further, she calls Him a prophet: *I see that thou art a prophet.* And still further, she recognizes Him for Christ and Messiah. It is the same way in the frequentation of the sacraments; one Communion disposes us for another. It is a great mistake to suppose that by staying away time after time from the reception of this Most Holy Sacrament one will approach it with greater preparation and reverence. So St. Augustine and St. Ambrose said very well that he who does not deserve to receive every day, does not deserve to receive once a year—*Qui non meretur quotidie accipere, non meretur post annum accipere.*

To meet the question, then, I say in the first place that our not experiencing so much profit from the frequentation of this Most Holy Sacrament comes sometimes from our own fault, in that we do not prepare and dispose ourselves for its reception as we ought, but we approach it by way of custom and ceremonial observance, as though we were to say: "I go to Communion because others go, and such is my custom." We approach, as I say, by way of ceremony, without previous consideration or realization of what we are going to do; that is why we find little profit in it. Therefore when one feels in himself no growth or improvement from the frequentation of this Holy Sacrament, he should look and examine carefully if it be not for want

of preparation; and if he finds it so, he should contrive a remedy.

At other times this is apt to happen in consequence of our falling with advertence into venial sins. There are two sorts of venial sins: the one committed by inadvertence, although with some carelessness and negligence; the other committed with advertence and of set purpose. Venial sins, inasmuch as for want of advertence they befall God-fearing persons who are diligent in His service, do not do this harm; but those that are committed deliberately, on purpose and advisedly, by people slack and remiss in the service of God, do hinder in great measure the divine effects of this Most Holy Sacrament. And the same we may say of faults committed deliberately and of set purpose by a religious in the observance of his rules and institute. As a father will show his son a severe countenance after he has committed some fault, thereby to rebuke and admonish him to be more careful in future, so God is wont to deal with us at Communion and meditation. If, then, we wish to share in the abundant fruits which they enjoy who approach this Divine Sacrament as they ought, we must contrive not to commit such faults deliberately and of set purpose. Let conscientious persons take great note of this, for it is a precaution of great importance if we wish to receive great favors from God.

In the third place, I say that our not experiencing in this Divine Sacrament the effects that we have mentioned, comes often not of any fault of ours; not on that account do we fail to receive great fruit in our souls, though we think we feel none. We are wont to say the same of meditation, in which many are apt to make the same complaint of not experiencing therein the relish and consolation that they could wish and which perchance they were wont to feel in former times; not on that account does their meditation fail to be very profitable. The food given to an invalid, though he has no appetite for it, does not for that fail to

sustain and benefit him. These are things that belong to the high providence of God, He being wont in this way to prove His servants, to exercise and humble them, and draw thence other good things known to Himself. Besides, this Sacrament sometimes works so secretly that man can hardly notice it. The work of grace is commonly like that of nature, little by little, as with a plant, that grows unseen, and then we see that it has grown. So St. Lawrence Justinian says that, as bodily food sustains a man and makes him grow without our noticing it, in like manner this Divine Sacrament comforts and strengthens the soul by an increase of grace, unperceived by us.

In the fourth place, I say that it counts for progress not only to go forward, but also not to fall and go back. The medicine that acts as a preservative against sickness is not less valuable than that which improves health. Let this be well observed, for it is matter of great consolation for those who do not see in themselves any palpable fruit of this Sacrament. We commonly see that those who frequently receive this divine food live in the fear of God, and the whole year goes by with them, and in many cases their whole life, without their committing mortal sin. Now this is one of the chief fruits and effects of this Sacrament, to preserve the communicant from falling into sins, as it is the effect of food to preserve the bodily life. The Council of Trent well observes the same, calling it "a remedy and medicine which rids us of our daily faults and preserves us from mortal sins"—*antidotum, quo liberamur a culpis quotidianis et a peccatis mortalibus praeservamur*. And though a man does not feel in himself that fervor and devotion, nor all that abundant satisfaction and consolation, nor experience after Communion that vigor and alacrity for good works which others are wont to feel, but rather dryness and lukewarmness, not on that account does he fail to receive fruit. And if while he goes to Communion he falls into some faults, if he did not go to Communion he

would fall into others and greater ones. Let us do honestly whatever is on our part to approach with the disposition and reverence that we have said, and without doubt great will be the profit which our soul will receive from the frequentation of this Divine Sacrament.

Tilman Bredenbach tells of a certain duke of Saxony named Wetterkind that, while he was an unbeliever, he was seized with a curiosity to see what went on in the Catholic realms of Charlemagne; and to do this more at his ease, he put on the habit of a pilgrim and went there. It was the time of Holy Week and Easter, when all the world went to Communion. He went about with attention, looking at everything; and amongst other things that he saw was this. When the priest was giving Communion to the people, he saw a very beautiful and shining Infant in every host; and he said that into the mouths of some who received, the Infant went with such alacrity and pleasure and good will, that it seemed that He Himself were going and bestirring Himself to come in; with others He seemed to come in very unwillingly and as it were perforce, turning away His head and hands and kicking with His feet, as though struggling not to enter into their mouths. This miracle led to the conversion to Christianity of this prince and all his people.

Another similar instance, which further illustrates what has gone before, is told of a secular priest at whose Mass a servant of God, who heard it, saw on the paten at the time of Communion, not the species of bread, but an Infant, turning away His face and like one protesting, resisting with hands and feet against being received. The servant of God saw this, not once, but several times. The priest one day in conversation with him went on to say that he did not know how it was, but every time he took the body of the Lord, he took it with extreme difficulty. Then the servant of God recounted to him what he had seen, and advised him to look to himself and amend. The priest took the advice very well, was contrite, and amended his life.

Then the same servant of God, hearing his Mass, saw the Infant as before, but at the time of Communion, with hands and feet joined, entering into the priest's mouth very quickly.

CHAPTER XIV

Of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

WE have spoken of this Divine Sacrament and its admirable virtues and effects inasmuch as it is a sacrament; it remains now to speak of it as a sacrifice, a thing which the Holy Council of Trent commands preachers and pastors to explain to their flock, that all may understand the great treasure which Christ our Redeemer has left to His Church in giving us this sacrifice, and may know how to profit by it. From the beginning of the world, or at least after sin, even in the natural law, there always were sacrifices, and they were necessary to appease God, to pay Him reverence and honor, and recognize His infinite excellence and majesty. So in the Old Law God instituted priests and many sacrifices; but as the law was imperfect, so the sacrifices also were imperfect. They slew many animals in sacrifice, but that could not bring them to perfection. The priesthood of Aaron and its sacrifices were not enough to sanctify men and release them from their sins. *It was impossible for sins to be taken away by the blood of bulls and goats*, says the Apostle St. Paul (Heb. x. 4). It was needful that there should come another priest of the order of Melchisedech, that is, Jesus Christ, and that He should offer another sacrifice, that is, of Himself, which should be enough to appease God, sanctify men, and raise them to perfection.

St. Augustine says that all the sacrifices of the Old Law signified and were a figure of this sacrifice; and that, as one and the same thing may be signified and conveyed to the

understanding by divers words and in divers tongues, so this one true sacrifice was signified and prefigured long before by all that multitude of sacrifices, partly to commend it to us much and many times over, and partly by diversity and variety to take away the weariness that is caused by many repetitions of the same thing. God commanded that only clean animals should be offered Him in sacrifice, to the end that we might understand that, as those animals which they were to sacrifice should be free from flaws and defects of body and have no stain on them, so He Who was to come to offer Himself in sacrifice for us must have on Him no stain of sin. If those sacrifices were pleasing to God, as it is certain that for the time they were pleasing to Him, it was inasmuch as they were an acknowledgment and profession on the part of men that there was to come a Savior and Redeemer Who was to be the true sacrifice, and in virtue of that acknowledgment those sacrifices had their value for the time. But on the coming of the Savior and Redeemer into the world those sacrifices ceased to be pleasing to God, as the Apostle says: *Entering into the world he says to his eternal Father: Sacrifice and oblation thou wouldst not, but a body thou hast prepared for me: holocausts for sin were not pleasing to thee, then said I, Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will, O God* (Psalm xxxix. 8; Heb. x. 5). God gave a body to His only-begotten Son that He might do the will of His Father by offering Himself for us on the Cross. So when He Who was prefigured came into the world, the shadow and figure ceased, and those ancient sacrifices ceased to be pleasing to God.

This, then, is the sacrifice which we have in the New Law, and which every day we offer in the Mass. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, is our sacrifice. *He gave himself up for us an oblation and victim to God for an odor of sweetness* (Eph. v. 2). These are no mere devout reflections, but facts taught us by faith. It is true that the Mass

is a memorial and representation of the Passion and death of Christ, and so He said when He instituted this sovereign sacrifice: *Do this in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19). But we must understand that it is not merely a memorial and representation of that sacrifice in which Christ offered Himself on the Cross to His eternal Father for our sins, but it is the same sacrifice which He then offered, and of the same value and efficacy. And, further, not only is it the same sacrifice, but also He Who offers now this Sacrifice of the Mass is the same Who offered that sacrifice on the Cross.

Thus as then at the time of His Passion Christ Himself was at once priest and sacrifice, so also now in the Mass Christ Himself is not only the sacrifice, but also the priest and pontiff who offers Himself every day in the Mass to the eternal Father by the ministry of His priests. And so the priest who says the Mass represents the person of Christ, and offers this sacrifice as His minister and instrument and in His name. This is well expressed by the words of consecration; for the priest does not say, *This is the body of Christ*, but, *This is My body*, as bearing the person of Christ, Who is the chief priest and pontiff who offers this sacrifice. And for this reason the Prophet David (Psalm cix. 4) and St. Paul (Heb. vii. 17, 21) call Him *a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech*. And He would not well be called a priest forever if He offered sacrifice only once, but He is always offering sacrifice by means of His priests, and never ceases, nor will cease till the end of the world. Such was the priest and such the pontiff that we needed, says the Apostle (Heb. vii. 26; v. 7), one not like other priests, one under no necessity to beg God's pardon first for his own sins, and then for those of his people, but one who should be heard for his dignity, and the reverence due to him—one who should appease God, not with the blood of others, but with his own.

Let us, then, now consider the contrivances of God and the art and wisdom of His counsels that He took for the

salvation of men, and what He did to make this sacrifice in every way acceptable, agreeable, and efficacious. There being four things in a sacrifice—first, to whom it is offered; second, who offers it; third, what it is that is offered; fourth, why it is offered—the wisdom of God ordered this sacrifice in such manner and with such art that He Who offers this sacrifice, to reconcile us with God, is one with Him to Whom it is offered, and has made Himself one with those for whom it is offered, and Himself is that which is offered, as St. Augustine explains. So it came to be of such value and efficacy as to suffice to satisfy and appease God, not only for our sins, but for those of the whole world, and of a hundred thousand worlds, if such there were. *He is the victim of propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world*, says the Apostle and Evangelist St. John (I John ii. 2). And so theologians and saints say that this sacrifice is not only sufficient satisfaction and atonement for our debts and sins, but an altogether superabundant atonement; for that which is given and offered here is much more than the debt that we had contracted; and this sacrifice is much more agreeable to the eternal Father than the offense committed had been offensive. Hence also, though the priest be a wicked man and a sinner, not on that account does this sacrifice cease to profit and avail those for whom it is offered, nor is aught of its value and efficacy diminished; for Christ is not only the sacrifice, but also the priest and pontiff who offers it; as the alms that you give loses nothing of its virtue and merit, though you send it by the hands of a servant who is a wicked and sinful man.

The Council of Trent says (Sess. 22): "It is one and the same victim, and the same offerer, now offering by the ministry of priests, Who then offered Himself on the Cross; only the manner of offering is different." The difference is, as the council goes on to explain, that what was offered on the Cross was a sacrifice in *blood*, by the shedding of

blood, because Christ was then passible and mortal; but the Sacrifice of the Mass is an *unbloody sacrifice*, without the shedding of blood, because *Christ rising from the dead dieth now no more: death shall no more have dominion over him* (Rom. vi. 9).

The council goes on to say, as say also the evangelists, that Christ the Redeemer of the world, coming to be sacrificed and die on the Cross to redeem us, would not have His sacrifice end there, being as He was *a priest forever* (Heb. v. 5, 10), but would have His Church possess it, and the sacrifice to be permanent. And inasmuch as He was *a priest according to the order of Melchisedech*, who offered a sacrifice of bread and wine, it was proper that this sacrifice should remain to us under the species of bread and wine; and so at the Last Supper, the night in which He was to be traitorously given over, He took bread and gave thanks, divided it and gave it to His disciples (Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19; I Cor. xi. 23). In the very hour when men were contriving to put Him to death, He was contriving to give them life. He wished to leave to His spouse, the visible Church, a visible sacrifice, such as the nature of men required—a sacrifice which should not only represent and bring to memory the sacrifice offered in blood on the Cross, but should have the same virtue and efficacy as that had to forgive sins and appease God and reconcile us to Him, and which should be in fact the same sacrifice. So He consecrated His most holy body and blood under the appearances of bread and wine, converting the bread into His body and the wine into His blood, and under those appearances He offered Himself to the eternal Father. This the doctors say was the first Mass celebrated in the world. At the same time He ordained His disciples priests of the New Testament, and bade them and their successors in the priesthood to offer this sacrifice, saying: *This do ye in memory of me* (Luke xxii. 19).

For this reason some say that the Feast of the Most Holy

Sacrament is the greatest of all the feasts of Christ our Redeemer that the Church celebrates; because the others are only a memory and representation, as the Incarnation, Nativity, Resurrection, and Ascension. The Son of God does not then become man, or be born, or rise again, or ascend into heaven; but this feast is not only a memory and representation, but Christ comes anew and is under the sacramental species every time the priest says the words of consecration; and every day there is offered in the Mass the same sacrifice that was offered when Christ our Redeemer died for us upon the Cross.

Let us here consider the great love of Christ for men, and the great debt that we owe Him, in that, not content with offering Himself once on the Cross for our sins, He would remain here in sacrifice, that we might have not once only, but many times, and every day till the end of the world, a well-pleasing sacrifice to offer to the eternal Father—a present so great and precious to present to Him to appease Him for our sins—a gift so precious and well-pleasing that greater there could not be. What would have become of the Christian people if we had not this sacrifice wherewith to appease God? We should have been like another Sodom and Gomorrah (Isaias i. 9); God would have leveled us to the ground and destroyed us, as our sins deserved. This, says St. Thomas, is the proper effect of sacrifice, to appease God thereby, according to the words of St. Paul: *He offered himself for us to God as an oblation and victim unto an odor of sweetness* (Eph. v. 2). As when on earth a man is appeased and pardons an injury done him in consideration of some offering or present that they make him, so this sacrifice and present that we make is so acceptable and agreeable to God as to be enough to appease Him, and warrant us to appear in His presence, and make Him regard us with loving eyes.

If on Good Friday, when the Redeemer of the world was crucified, you had found your way to the foot of the

Cross, and some drops of His Precious Blood had fallen upon you, what consolation your soul would have felt! What strength you would have gathered! What hope so certain of your salvation you would have conceived! The thief, who all his life long had known no other trade but stealing, conceived such a great hope that of robber he turned saint, and of the cross he made paradise. Now the same Son of God, Who then offered Himself on the Cross, the same offers Himself now in the Mass for you, and this sacrifice is of the same value and efficacy as that; and so the Church says: "Every time this commemorative sacrifice is celebrated, the work of our redemption is enacted." The great fruits of that sacrifice offered in blood are poured out and communicated to us by this bloodless offering.

So high and sovereign is this sacrifice that it can be offered to God alone. And the Council of Trent observes that, though the Church is accustomed to say Mass in reverence and memory of the saints, yet this Sacrifice of the Mass is not offered to the saints. And so the Church does not say, "I offer to thee, St. Peter, or St. Paul," but it is offered to God alone, giving Him thanks for the victories and crowns which He has granted to His saints, and imploring their patronage, that they may intercede for us in heaven, since we honor and reverence them on earth.

Thus this divine mystery is not only a sacrament, like the other sacraments, but is at the same time a sacrifice. There is a great difference between these two concepts of sacrament and sacrifice. Its being a sacrifice consists in its being offered by means of the priest in the Mass. It is the received opinion of theologians that the essence of this sacrifice consists in the consecration of both species, and that it is then offered when the consecration is complete. As that sacrifice in blood was complete in the instant in which He offered Himself to the eternal Father for us on the Cross, so in the Mass, which is a true representation of that sacrifice and is identical with it, the sacrifice is essentially

completed and offered in the instant in which the priest has done saying the words of consecration over the bread and over the wine. There and then, by force and virtue of those words, the body is in the host and the blood in the chalice. This consecration of the blood, which is done after the consecration of the body, represents to the life the shedding of the blood of Christ, and consequently the separation of His soul from His body, which ensued upon the shedding and separation of the blood from the body. Thus by the words of consecration there is effected the sacrifice that is offered, and by those same words the offering is done. But its being a sacrament is something permanent, after the consecration, so long as the species last, when it is kept in the tabernacle, when it is taken to the sick, when it is given in Communion, and it has not then the essence and virtue of a sacrifice.

There is another difference, that, as it is a sacrament, it profits the recipient like the other sacraments, giving grace and producing its proper effects; but as it is a sacrifice, it profits not only him who receives it, but also others for whom it is offered. So the Council of Trent observes that it was for these two objects and these two reasons that Christ instituted this Divine Mystery; the one that, as a sacrament, it might be sustenance to the soul, enabling her to preserve, restore, and renew her spiritual life; the other that the Church might have a perpetual sacrifice to offer to God for pardon and expiation of our sins, for a remedy in our needs, for a return and a thanksgiving for benefits received, and to win and obtain new graces and favors of the Lord. And it is not only a remedy and relief for the living, but also for the dead who die in grace and are in purgatory; all benefit by this sacrifice.

It is also a very consoling fact that the priest, when he says Mass, offers the sacrifice for himself and others, and at the same time all who are there hearing it offer along with him this sacrifice for themselves and others. As when

a township makes a present to its lord, there come three or four men, and one alone speaks to him, but all bring the present and all offer it; so here the priest alone speaks and with his hands offers this sacrifice, but all offer it by the hands of the priest. It is true that there is a difference, inasmuch as in the example given, though they choose one spokesman, yet any one of them might have discharged that function; whereas it is not so in the Mass, for the priest alone, who is chosen by God for that purpose, can consecrate and do what is done in the Mass, but all the rest, who serve or assist at it, likewise offer this sacrifice. And so the priest himself says in the Mass: "Pray, brethren, to God that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable and agreeable to Almighty God." And in the canon he says, *pro quibus tibi offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt*—"for whom we offer to Thee, or who themselves offer." This should inspire much solicitude in all to hear or help at Mass, on which point we will enlarge in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XV

How to Hear Mass

WHAT we have said seems to oblige us to speak on the subject how to hear Mass, and what to do during it. On this we will say three things, which will be three devotions that we may practise at Mass, each of them much to the point, and all three may be practised together. And they shall not be out of our own head, but of our Mother the Church, that they may be regarded and valued as in reason they should be. For the first we must presuppose that the Mass is a memorial of the Passion and death of Christ, as has been said. The Redeemer of the world wished this holy sacrifice to be a memorial of His Passion and of the love that He bore us. He meant us to remember what He had suffered for us, and that this continued remem-

brance should greatly rouse us to love and serve Him, that we should not be like that people who *forgot the God who saved them* (Psalm cv. 21). Thus one of the excellent devotions that we may practise at Mass is to consider the mysteries of the Passion there represented, eliciting therefrom acts of love and purposes to serve the Lord loyally.

For this it will be a great help to know the significations of what is said and done at Mass, to lead us to understand and appreciate better and better the great mysteries there represented; because there is no word or sign or ceremony that is not fraught with great meanings and mysteries; and all the vestments and ornaments that the priest puts on to say Mass also represent to us the same. The amice, the saints say, represents the veil wherewith they covered the face of Christ our Redeemer when they said to Him, striking Him on the face, *Prophecy who hath struck thee* (Mark xiv. 65; Matt. xxvi. 68). The alb is the white garment in which Herod clothed Him in mockery, and scorned Him along with his army, and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11). The girdle represents either the first cords with which He was bound when they seized Him, or the scourges wherewith He was scourged by order of Pilate. The maniple represents the second cords wherewith they bound Christ's hands to the pillar when they scourged Him. It is put on the left arm, because that is nearer the heart, to denote the great love wherewith He received those cruel scourges for our sins, and the love wherewith it is reasonable that we should correspond to so great love and bounty. The stole represents the third binding of Him, which was the rope they cast round His neck when He carried the Cross on His shoulders to be crucified. The chasuble represents the purple robe wherewith they clothed Him in mockery (Matt. xxvii. 28); or, according to others, the seamless tunic of which they stripped Him to crucify Him (John xix. 27).

The coming of the priest into the sacristy to put on the

priestly vestments represents the entry of Christ into this world, in the sacred shrine of the virginal womb of the Virgin Mary, His Mother, where He vested Himself in the vestures of our humanity to go and celebrate the sacrifice of the Cross. At the going out of the priest from the sacristy the choir sings the introit of the Mass, which signifies the ardent desires and sighs with which the holy Fathers looked forward to the Incarnation of the Son of God. *Oh, that thou wouldst break through the heavens and descend!* (Isaias lxiv. 1). The introit is repeated a second time, to signify the iteration of these cries and desires which those holy Fathers put forth to see Christ in the world clad in our flesh. The priest saying the Confiteor as a penitent man signifies that Christ took upon Himself all our sins to atone for them, and was willing to appear a sinner and be accounted for such, as the Prophet Isaias says (Isaias liii. 4, 11), that we might be justified and sanctified. The Kyries, which mean "Lord, have mercy," signify the great misery in which we all were before the coming of Christ. It would be a long business to run through all the mysteries in particular. Suffice it to understand that there is nothing in the Mass that is not full of mysteries. All those signs and crosses that the priest makes over the host and the chalice are to represent to us and bring into our memory the many various torments and pains that Christ suffered for us on the Cross. The elevation of host and chalice after the consecration, besides the fact of its being done for the people to adore, represents how they raised the Cross on high that all might see Him crucified. Each may occupy himself in the consideration of one mystery or two, as devotion shall lead him, gathering fruit therefrom and seeking to correspond to so great love and bounty. This will be more profitable than hurriedly running the memory over many mysteries. This is the first devotion that we may practise at Mass.

The second devotion and method of hearing Mass is a

capital method and one very proper to the purpose; we outlined it in the previous chapter. For the understanding thereof we must presuppose two things which we there laid down. The first is that the Mass is not only a memorial and representation of the Passion of Christ, and of that sacrifice which He offered on the Cross to the eternal Father for our sins, but is the same sacrifice which was then offered and of the same value and efficacy. The second is that, though the priest alone speaks and with his hands offers this sacrifice, yet all the bystanders also offer it along with him. This being supposed, I say that the best way of hearing Mass is to go along with the priest, offering this sacrifice and doing so far as we can what he does, reckoning that we all unite there, not only in hearing Mass, but in offering that sacrifice along with the priest, since in sober reality that is the fact. To this end it is enjoined that priests should say in a clear and moderately loud voice those parts of the Mass which it is proper for the people to hear, that so they may enter into it and prepare themselves along with the priest to offer this sacrifice with that preparation which the Church has ordained for this purpose so wisely and so advisedly. For all that is here said and done is meant to prepare and dispose both priest and assistants to offer this high sacrifice with the utmost devotion and reverence.

That we may better be able to carry this out, it is well to notice that the Mass has three principal parts. The first is from the Confiteor to the offertory, which is all to prepare the people to offer this sacrifice worthily. This is done at the beginning by the Confiteor and by some verses of the psalms even before the going up to the altar. Then comes the Kyrie, which besides signifying, as we have said, the great misery in which we were before the coming of Christ, gives us also to understand that he who has to treat with God cannot treat with Him on grounds of justice, but only of mercy. Then there follows the *Gloria in excel-*

sis Deo, giving glory to God for the Incarnation, and acknowledging the greatness of that benefit. Then follows the collect. And it is to be observed that the priest says *Oremus*, and not *Oro*, that all may pray with him, and he in the person of all. And that this may be done with more spirit, a petition goes before praying for the assistance of the Holy Ghost for that purpose, by the priest turning to the people with *Dominus vobiscum*, and the people answering, *Et cum spiritu tuo*. The epistle signifies the doctrine of the Old Testament and the teaching of St. John Baptist, which preceded the doctrine of the Gospel as a sort of catechetical preparation. The gradual, which is said after the epistle, signifies the penance that the people did at the preaching of John the Baptist. The Alleluia, which follows after the gradual, signifies the joy of the soul after having obtained pardon of her sins by means of penance. The Gospel signifies the doctrine which Christ preached in the world. The priest makes the sign of the cross on the book which he has to read, because he has to preach to us Christ crucified; and then he makes the sign of the cross on his forehead, mouth, and breast, as do the people also, whereby we profess that we hold to Christ crucified in our hearts and will confess Him with our tongues and with our uncovered faces, and that we will live and die in this confession. Fresh lights are lit for the reading of the Gospel, since this is the doctrine that enlightens our souls, and the light that the Son of God brought into the world. The Gospel is heard standing, to let us see the readiness which we should have to obey it, and to defend it when necessary. It is heard with head uncovered, to give us to understand the reverence which we should have for the word of God. Thereupon follows the creed, which is the fruit gathered from the doctrine of the Gospel, for in it we confess the articles and principal mysteries of our faith. This is the first part of the Mass, which they call the Mass of the Catechumens, because up to this point the catechumens,

who were not baptized, were allowed to be present at the Mass, as also unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles, that they might hear the word of God and be instructed therein.

The second part of the Mass is from the offertory to the Pater Noster, which is called the Mass of Sacrifice, at which only Christians can be present. And so it was the custom for the deacon to give notice from the pulpit for the catechumens to go; and then he said to them in olden times, *Ite, missa est*—"Go, because this is the Mass;" the sacrifice is now beginning, at which it is not lawful for you to assist. This is the principal part of the Mass, in which is done the consecration and the offering of the Consecrated. So the priest begins to keep silence, and say the prayers in secret, not to be heard by the bystanders, since now the sacrifice is approaching. So at the approach of His Passion the holy Gospel says that Christ our Redeemer retired to the desert, to the town of Ephrem, and no longer walked in public (John xi. 54). As now the priest is coming near to the offering of the sacrifice, he washes his hands, to give us to understand the cleanness and purity with which we should draw nigh to this sacrifice. And turning to the people he tells them to pray along with him that this sacrifice may be acceptable and agreeable to the majesty of God. Then after a short prayer in secret he once more breaks silence with the preface, which is a special warning whereby the priest disposes himself and the people for this sacrifice, exhorting them to lift up their hearts to heaven and return thanks to the Lord for having come down from heaven to take our flesh and die for us. *Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest*, which are the praises with which they received Him in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matt. xxi. 9). *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts*, are the cries with which the courtiers of heaven utter their perpetual praise, as says Isaias (vi. 3), and St. John in the Apocalypse (iv. 8). Then begins the canon of the Mass, wherein the priest

begs the eternal Father, through the merits of Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, to accept this sacrifice for the Church, for the pope, for the bishop, for the king. Then in secret he prays God for particular persons, offering also the sacrifice for them, making the first Memento, which we call the Memento of the Living; and he particularly offers this sacrifice for all the persons present at it. Thus it is a very profitable thing to assist at Mass, since those who assist at it come in for a greater share of the gifts of God, even as they who are in waiting at the table of the king, and they who come out to receive him when he makes his entry into the city; and as they who were at the foot of the Cross, St. John and Our Lady, Magdalen and the Good Thief. Rupert says that to be present at Mass is being present at the obsequies of Christ our Redeemer. Then follows the consecration, in which, as we said in the last chapter, the sacrifice of the Mass consists and is offered for all those of whom mention has been made in the Memento.

I say, then, that the best devotion that one can have at Mass is to continue attending to what the priest says and does, and to continue offering along with him this sacrifice, and doing, so far as possible, what he does, as one who has a part in the great transaction that is there carried on and celebrated. And when the priest makes the Memento for the Living, it is good for everyone present to make also his Memento, asking God on behalf of the living, and afterwards of the dead, even as the priest does.

Our Father Francis Borgia made his Memento in this way. Presupposing the consideration already mentioned, that this sacrifice represents and is the same with that which was offered for us on the Cross, he made his Memento by the five wounds of Christ. In the wound of the right hand he commended to God the pope and the cardinals, all bishops and prelates, clerics and parish priests, and all the ecclesiastical state. In the wound of the left hand he

commended to God the king and all the justices, and chief officers of the secular arm. In the wound of the right foot, all religious orders, and particularly the Society. In the wound of the left foot, all his kinsmen, relations, friends, and benefactors, and all who had recommended themselves to him in his prayers. The wound in the side he reserved for himself, and there he entered and took refuge, as *in the hole in the rock, in the hollow in the wall* (Cant. ii. 14), begging God's pardon for his sins and remedy for his necessities and miseries. So he offered this sacrifice for all these ends, and for each of them as if he were offering it for that alone, offering it always particularly for that person or persons for whom he said the Mass of obligation or devotion, with a will that there should be applied to him all that part of that sacrifice that was due to him, without his being the loser in any way by the other intentions for which he offered it. He did the like in the Memento for the Dead, offering that sacrifice in the first place for the person or persons for whom in particular he was saying that Mass; secondly, for the souls of his parents and relations, thirdly, for the deceased members of his order; fourthly, for his friends, benefactors, and persons recommended to him, and for all to whom he was under any obligation; fifthly, for the souls that were most forsaken, who had none to pray for them, and such as were undergoing more grievous pains and were in greater need, and for those who were nearest to going out of purgatory, and for all for whom it would be greater charity and service of God to offer it. We may follow this plan, or any other, as each shall find it best.

And particularly we should offer this sacrifice for three things, which among many others oblige and bind us in every way: first, in thanksgiving for the great benefits that we have received at the hand of God, as well general as particular; secondly, in satisfaction and atonement for our sins; thirdly, to beg a remedy for our necessities and weaknesses, and gain new favors from the Lord. And it is

very well for each one to offer this sacrifice to God for these three ends, not for himself alone, but also for his neighbors; offering it not only for the benefits that he has received, but also for the so great favors that God has done, and does every day, to all mankind. And not only in satisfaction and atonement for his own sins, but also for all the sins of the world, since this is enough and more than enough to satisfy and appease the eternal Father for them all. And not only to beg a remedy for private and particular miseries and necessities, but for all those of the Church. And hereby one better falls in with the priest, who does so; besides, charity and zeal for souls require that an individual should not look to his own particular account only, but to the common good of the Church. And, speaking generally, it is well to offer this sacrifice for all the intentions for which Christ offered Himself upon the Cross, and for all for which He wished it to be offered when He instituted it. And it will be well for us to offer ourselves also along with Christ in sacrifice to the eternal Father every day in the Mass for these intentions, leaving nothing in us that we do not offer. For though it is true that our works of themselves are worth very little, yet, taken with the blood of Christ and in union with His merits and Passion, they will be of great value and very pleasing in God's eyes.

St. Chrysostom says that the hour in which this divine sacrifice is offered is the most opportune time there is for dealing with God, and that the angels hold it for a most happy occasion to ask for favors on behalf of the human race; and that they cry to God then with great earnestness on our behalf at so favorable a moment. He further says that there are there heavenly squadrons of cherubim and seraphim, kneeling with great reverence before the majesty of God; and that forthwith upon the offering of this sacrifice these heavenly messengers fly with mandates for the opening of the prisons of purgatory and the execution of what has been there at Mass arranged. Thus

there is reason for us to value this opportunity and profit by so good an occasion, and go to Mass to offer that divine sacrifice with great confidence that by means thereof we shall appease the anger of the eternal Father and pay the debts of our sins, and gain the gifts and favors that we ask for.

The third devotion appertains particularly to the third part of the Mass, which is from the Pater Noster to the end. This part contains the priest's Communion and the prayers that are said after Communion, all of which are a thanksgiving for the benefit received. What the hearers of Mass have to do then at that time is there also to accompany the priest as far as they can. We cannot communicate sacramentally at every Mass, but we can spiritually. This, then, is the third devotion for Mass, a very good and profitable devotion, that, when the priest communicates sacramentally, those who are present should also communicate spiritually. Spiritual Communion is the forming of a great desire of receiving this Most Holy Sacrament, according to those words of Job: *Who will give us of his flesh, that we may be filled?* (Job xxxi. 31). As a glutton feasts his eyes on a delicate morsel, so the servant of God should set his eyes and his heart on this divine food; and when the priest opens his mouth to receive it, he too should open the mouth of his soul with great desire to receive the same and enjoy the relish thereof. In this way God will satisfy his heart's desire by an increase of grace and charity, as He promises by the prophet: *Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it* (Psalm lxxx. 11). But the Council of Trent here observes that for this desire of the Most Holy Sacrament to be a spiritual Communion, it must spring from a lively faith informed with charity; that is to say, it is necessary that he who forms this desire should be in charity and the grace of God, for then he reaches the attainment of this spiritual fruit, increasing his union with Christ. But such a desire, in a person in mortal sin, would not be a

spiritual Communion; rather, if he were to desire to communicate, remaining the while in mortal sin, he would sin mortally. And if his desire supposed his first getting out of his sin, though it would be a good desire, it would not be a spiritual Communion, because, as he is not in grace, he cannot receive the fruit thereof. Thus he must be in the grace of God; and then to have that desire is to communicate spiritually, since by this desire of receiving that Most Holy Sacrament he partakes of all the good gifts and spiritual graces that they are apt to partake of who receive sacramentally.

It may even be that one who communicates spiritually receives more grace than another who communicates sacramentally, though that Communion be made in the state of grace. For though it is true that sacramental Communion of itself is more profitable and gives more grace than spiritual Communion by the fact of its being a sacrament and fraught with the sacramental privilege of conferring grace *ex opere operato*, which spiritual Communion does not do, yet so great may be the reverence and humility of some particular person, in his desire to receive this Most Holy Sacrament, that he will receive thereby greater grace than another who receives sacramentally, but not so well disposed.

Furthermore, there is another thing about spiritual Communion, that, being secret and not seen by others, it is not attended with any danger of vainglory in the eyes of bystanders, as is the case with sacramental Communion, which is public. And it has another privilege besides which sacramental Communion has not, that it can be made more frequently. For sacramental Communion is made once in the week, or at most, once a day; but spiritual Communion may be made not only every day, but many times a day. So there are many who have the laudable custom of communicating spiritually, not only when they hear Mass, but

every time they visit the Most Holy Sacrament, and at other times.

There is a good method of spiritual Communion which some servants of God practise; we will set it down here, that anyone may profit of it who will. When you hear Mass or visit the Most Holy Sacrament, or at any time whenever you wish to communicate spiritually, rouse your heart to affections and desires to receive this Most Holy Sacrament, and say: "O Lord, who shall have the cleanness and purity requisite to receive worthily so great a Guest! Oh, who shall be worthy to receive Thee daily and keep Thee ever in his breast! O Lord, how rich I should be, could I deserve to receive Thee and take Thee home to my house! How happy would be my lot! But it is not necessary, O Lord, for Thee to come to me sacramentally to enrich me; only will it, my God, and that will be enough; command it, O Lord, and I shall be justified." And in testimony thereof say those words (Matt. viii. 8) which the Church uses: "My Lord Jesus Christ, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter into my dwelling; but do Thou speak, for at Thy mere word my soul shall be whole and saved. If looking upon the brazen serpent (Num. xxi. 9) was enough to cure the wounded, it must also be enough to look at Thee with lively faith and ardent desire to receive Thee." And it would be well to conclude with the antiphon, "O Sacred Banquet," and the versicle *Panem de coelo*, with the collect of the Most Holy Sacrament.

CHAPTER XVI

*Some Examples on the Devotion of Hearing Mass, and
Saying It Every Day, and the Reverence That We
Should Have in Assisting at It*

POPE PIUS II and Sabelicus relate that in the Province of Istria, which marches with Pannonia and Austria, there lived a devout knight who was harassed by a grave

temptation to hang himself, and sometimes was on the point of doing so. Living under this temptation, he disclosed it to a learned and God-fearing religious, to ask his advice. The religious comforted and consoled him greatly, and then told him to keep in his retinue a chaplain who should say Mass daily. He thought this a good plan, and made an agreement with a priest accordingly. The two of them went to live in a good castle which he had in the country. There for a twelvemonth he lived undisturbed, thanks to this most holy devotion. It happened one day that his chaplain asked his leave to go and keep a feast in a neighboring town with a clerical friend of his. The knight gave leave, intending to go there and hear Mass and be present at the feast. But something came in the way to detain him, so that it was midday when he managed to get out of his castle, much annoyed at the thought of missing Mass and already troubled with his old temptation. On his way in this distress he met with a peasant coming from that place, who assured him that divine service there was already over. At that the knight was so much afflicted that he began to curse his luck, and said that now, not having heard Mass that day, he gave himself up for a lost man. The peasant told him not to trouble himself, for he would sell him the Mass and all that he had merited before God by it. The knight agreed, and so a bargain was struck that he should give him the cloak that he was wearing. He gave it to him with hearty good will, and thereupon they parted. However, the knight thought fit to go to the town and make his prayer in the church. He did so, and afterwards returning to his house, when he reached the spot, the scene of that simoniacal transaction, he saw that the peasant had hung himself on a tree, God so permitting in punishment for his sin. He was much amazed, and gave thanks to the Lord for having delivered him; and henceforth, though he lived many years afterwards, he was no more troubled with that temptation.

In the chronicles of St. Francis we read of Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal and niece of St. Elizabeth of Hungary, that among other great virtues that she had, one was her tender compassion for the poor and the sick and her readiness to help them. It is said of her that no poor person ever asked her for alms whom she did not relieve, and, besides, she laid an injunction on her almoner to refuse alms to none. Now this holy queen had a page or valet, whom she employed in the distribution of her alms and her works of charity, as he was a virtuous boy and well-mannered. It happened that there was another page, a valet of the king, Don Dionysius, her husband, and in high favor with him. This page, seeing the favor in which the other stood with the queen, for envy of him and to curry favor with his master, tried to set him in an ill light by saying that the queen had an improper affection for him. And as the king was not leading a very good life, he was moved by the devil to feel at heart some uneasiness, and there stole over him a certain distrust of the queen, his wife. Wherefore, shocked at what his page had told him—though it is true that he did not altogether believe it, but was in a state of doubt—he made up his mind in any case to have that other page secretly put to death. That day he went out to take horse-exercise, and passed by a place where there was a limekiln, which was a light burning lime. He called apart the men who were stoking the fire, and gave them charge about a valet of his, whom he would send them with a message, asking whether they had done what the king had commanded; they were to seize him at once and cast him into the furnace, so that he should die outright there, that being a point appertaining to his highness' service. When, then, the next morning came, the king directed the queen's page to go with this message to the furnace aforesaid. But our Lord, Who never fails His servants and stands forth in defense of those who are innocent and blameless, ordained that this youth should pass

by a church, where they were ringing the elevation bell for a Mass that was then being said. He went in, and heard that Mass to the end, and two others that then began one after another. The king meanwhile, anxious to know if he was already dead, happening to see the other page of the bedchamber, the one who had brought the accusation and given the false witness before the king, sent him in all haste to the furnace, to know if what he had commanded had been done. When he arrived with the message, being by all tokens the man whom the king had spoken to them about, the furnace men seized him at once, bound him, and cast him in alive. Meanwhile the other page, the innocent and faultless one, had finished hearing his Masses, and came to give the king's message to those who were stoking the furnace, asking if they had fulfilled my lord's commands, and they answered, Yes. With that answer he went back to the king. When the king saw him, he was almost beside himself, seeing and considering how this affair had turned out, quite the other way to what he had arranged and ordered. Turning to the page, he began to scold him, asking him where he had loitered such a long time. Then the servant gave him an account of himself and answered: "Sir, as I was going to carry out your highness' command, I happened to pass close by a church, where they were ringing the elevation bell; I went in and heard that Mass to the end; and before it was finished, they began another and another Mass, and so I waited until they were all done, for my father gave me as his last blessing before he died an injunction, that all the Masses that I saw begin, I should hear unto the end." Then the king by this judgment of God came to open his eyes to the truth, to the innocence of the queen, and the fidelity and virtue of the good servant, and so cast away the evil imagination that he was entertaining against her.

In the "Manual of Examples" it is related that there lived in a town two tradesmen of the same trade. One of them

had a wife, sons, and family, and nevertheless was so devout as to hear Mass every day, and would on no account miss it; and so our Lord helped him, and his business went well, and his stock increased. The other on the contrary, though he had no child, nor servant, but only his wife, and was always at work day and night, even on feast days, and seldom heard Mass, yet never could get out of his wretched condition, but lived in great need and poverty. Seeing, then, how well the other was getting on, he one day put himself in his way, and asked him from what source so many good things came in to him, and he made such profits. "Why," he said, "though you have such a family of children and a wife, the necessities of life are never wanting to you. Your needs are always sufficiently supplied; and here I am alone with my wife, working harder than you do, and yet I live in never-ending need and poverty." The other, who had the devout habit of hearing daily Mass, said in reply that he would show him tomorrow the place where he found this gain. Morning came, and he went to the other's house and took him with him to church; and, after hearing Mass, told him to go back to his house and work. He did the same the next day, and said to him the same words. But on the third day, when he came to his house to take him with him to church, the other said to him: "Friend, if I wanted to go to church, there would be no need for you to come and take me there. I know the road well; what I wanted to know was, where is the place where you found such a vantage-ground for growing rich, and I wanted you to take me there where I too could enrich myself." He answered him, saying: "I do not know nor have I any other place where to look for treasure of the body and the reward of life everlasting but in the church." And in confirmation he added: "Have you not heard what the Lord says in the Gospel: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all other things shall be thrown in to you* (Matt. vi. 33)?" The good man, hearing this, under-

stood the mystery, and was contrite for his sin, amended his life, and became thenceforth very devout, and heard his Mass every day from that day forth, and also began to get well and prosper and succeed in all his affairs.

St. Antoninus of Florence relates that of two young friends, who went out from town one feast day to go and enjoy themselves in the country at a certain hunting-party, one of them had taken care to hear Mass and fulfil the Church's precept, and the other had not. As they went on together on their way, the weather set in to change and the heavens to lower. It looked as though the sky were going to fall and drown the world with the great claps of thunder that began, and the frequent flashes of lightning which came in rapid succession with portentously heavy rain. Between the flashes there was heard in the air a voice, and these youths themselves heard it, saying: "Give it him, strike him!" They stood aghast, but as the weather cleared up they went on their way; and when they were not expecting it, there let a flash, and killed the unhappy youth who had not that day heard Mass. Great was the terror and bewilderment that it caused in the other; he was out of his wits, and did not know what to do with himself. Finally, mainly because he was now near the place of meeting where the hunt was to come off, he went on and continued his journey, when he heard another voice that said: "Strike him, strike this one!" The poor fellow was much terrified at this voice, remembering what had happened to his companion; but he heard another voice in the air, which said: "I cannot, since today he has heard the *Et Verbum caro factum est*," meaning thereby that he had heard Mass, because at the end of it there is usually said the Gospel of St. John, where these words occur. And so that youth escaped that terrible and sudden death.

We read of St. Bonaventure that, considering the sovereign majesty of God, Who is in this Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and his very lowly condition, and fear-

ing to fail to receive the Lord with due dispositions, he went many days without approaching the altar; and one day, hearing Mass, at the time when the priest broke the host, one part of it came to him and put itself in his mouth. Returning thanks to the Lord for this incomparable favor, he understood that it was meant to teach him that God is more pleased with those who lovingly and with heartfelt affection approach and receive Him, than with those who for fear stand aloof and omit to receive Him; as afterwards the saint himself put in writing. And St. Thomas wrote the same.

It is related of the holy Friar Ferdinand de Talavera, first Archbishop of Granada, that, when he was at court, occupied in many grave affairs of state, his many enemies not finding anything else they could accuse him of, some of them complained that he said Mass every day; they wondered how, with so many arduous charges upon him, he could be so well prepared, in such repose and peace of mind, as to celebrate every day as though he were in his monastery. When the Cardinal of Spain, the Archbishop of Toledo, Don Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, one day in familiar conversation told him what was said, the servant of God answered: "This is how it is, my lord. Since their highnesses have laid such heavy responsibilities on me, giving me a charge that is wholly beyond my strength, I have no other resource, not to fall down to the ground under my burden, but to betake myself every day to the Holy Sacrament, that so I may be able to have strength to carry on to the end, and give a good account of what their highnesses have entrusted me with."

Surius relates of St. Peter Celestine, who was afterwards pope, that, setting himself one day to consider on the one hand the great majesty of the Lord, Who is present in this Most Holy Sacrament, and on the other his own meanness and unworthiness, and calling to mind St. Paul the first hermit, St. Anthony, St. Francis, and other saints, who had

never dared to exercise this holy ministry of Mass and daily Communion, he fell into great doubt and perplexity concerning the frequentation of it, and abstained for some days in fear, trembling, and reverence for so great a Lord. He made up his mind to go to Rome to consult the pope on the question, whether it would be better to abstain from celebrating altogether or for some time. On his traveling for this purpose, there appeared to him on the road a holy abbot, already dead, the one who had given him the habit, and said to him: "Who, son, angel though he be, is worthy of this ministry? Nevertheless, I advise thee frequently to celebrate with fear and reverence;" and forthwith he disappeared.

St. Gregory relates that a little before his time it happened that a man was taken and carried off captive by the enemy to far distant lands, where he was for a long time imprisoned without anyone's knowing or having news of him. After the lapse of so long a time, his wife believed him dead, and as such had Masses and sacrifices offered every week for his soul. And it pleased the Lord that, every time the Masses were said for him, the poor captive found himself free from his bonds. Not long after that, it came about that the man came out from his captivity and returned home free. He told his wife among other things this marvelous fact, which filled him with astonishment and wonder, that on certain days and at certain hours every week his chains fell off him, as has been said. His wife found by computation that it was just on these days and at these hours that she had had the sacrifice offered and Masses said for him. St. Gregory adds: "Hence, brethren, we may learn the efficacy of this sacrifice offered for us to loosen the bonds and fetters of the soul." Venerable Bede narrates a similar story.

St. Chrysostom says that at the time the priest celebrates the angels there assist, and that at the hour of the offering the altar is surrounded with angels. And he says that he

had heard it related by a trustworthy person that an old man, a great servant of God, had seen suddenly descend from heaven a great multitude of angels, and that the altar was surrounded by them, vested in such bright robes that the sight dazzled his eyes, bowing down like soldiers before their king. "So I can well believe," says this glorious saint, "since where the King is, there the courtiers are." And St. Gregory says: "Who doubts but that, in the hour in which this holy sacrifice is offered, at the voice of the priest the heavens are opened, and the courtiers of heaven come down along with Christ, and the whole place is encompassed with choirs of angels, like good courtiers in attendance on their king?" And thus many saints explain that passage of St. Paul, where he commands women to have their heads covered in church, giving as his reason, *propter angelos*—"for the sake of the angels" (I Cor. xi. 10).

St. Nilus writes of the same St. John Chrysostom, who was his master, that, when he went into the church, he saw a great multitude of angels, clothed in white, with bare feet, bending their bodies with great reverence, in complete silence, and as it were quite overawed at the presence of Christ our God and Lord in this Sacrament. In accordance with this, the glorious Chrysostom says: "When you are before this Divine Sacrament, you must not think that you are in company with men on earth. Do you feel the near presence of those heavenly troops of cherubim and seraphim, who stand before that great Lord of heaven and earth? Be ye, brethren, in the church in great silence, with fear and trembling. See how a king's courtiers stand in his presence, how modest and grave and respectful they are. No one there dares utter a word, or roll his eyes one way or another; learn from thence the way in which you ought to appear before God."

**PRACTICE OF PERFECTION
AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES**

PRACTICE OF PERFECTION AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

By

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

of the Society of Jesus

Newly Translated from the Original Spanish

By

JOSEPH RICKABY

of the Same Society

**IN THREE VOLUMES
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T-POLP-R-OR

ALPHONSUS RODRIGUEZ

to

THE READER

The matters I have treated of in the first and second volumes regard a religious life in general, but these I now treat of regard it in particular; and therefore I have entitled this third volume *Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection*. Things are so disposed in it that they do not only suit all other religious orders as well as our own, but also that they may be very profitable to all secular persons who aspire to perfection. For though the first treatise, for example, speaks of the end and institution of our Society in particular, yet it omits not to treat of several general matters, such as good example, zeal for the salvation of souls, diffidence in ourselves and confidence in God, fraternal correction, manifestation of conscience to our confessor and spiritual father, all which are subjects interesting to everyone. And, generally, all the virtues I treat of in this last volume are proper to all sorts of persons, because everyone may either embrace and practise them in desire, if the obligation of his state hinders him from observing them in effect; or he may make use of them to resist and overcome the contrary inclinations which nature causes in him. I hope, by the mercy of God, that the reading of this work will excite religious more and more to the practice of perfection, according to the duty of their profession; and will inspire seculars with a desire of imitating them as far as the state of each one will permit; so that the one and the other will hereby daily increase their fervor in God's service.

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SEVENTEENTH TREATISE

ON THE END AND INSTITUTE OF THE
SOCIETY OF JESUS



CHAPTER I

The End and Institute of the Society of Jesus

ATTEND to thyself and to teaching, be earnest therein, for, so doing, thou wilt save thyself and them that hear thee (I Tim. iv. 16).

Attend to thyself, and attend also to the teaching and instruction of thy neighbor; apply thyself with all diligence to the one and to the other, for in this way thou shalt save thyself and also them that hear thee. In these two things consists the end for which the Society was instituted, as our Constitutions and the apostolic bulls say: "The end of this Society is not only to attend by the grace of God to the salvation and perfection of our own souls, but by the same to apply ourselves earnestly to the salvation and perfection of our neighbor." And this is to be done not in any "as you like it" fashion, but "earnestly," a word expressive of vigor, efficiency, fervor, and intensity. The Society looks for men who will go about attaining the end of their calling with fervor, vigor, and energy. Here we must take note that, as in our own case our aim should be not salvation merely, but salvation with perfection, so we are required by our institute not to be content with helping our neighbors unto salvation, but we should endeavor to get them to make progress and go forward in virtue and perfection, each one according to his state. And so Father General Claudius Aquaviva in his "Instruction for Confessors" recommends us not to set our eyes on having a great number of penitents, but on those that we have to deal with making good progress. We should take the same interest in the progress and perfection of our neighbor as in our own, using the same care and diligence over the one as over the other.

For this, the Society was founded in these troublous times. Our blessed Father Ignatius saw the Church of God well provided with religious orders that attend to their own spiritual progress, keeping up choir and divine service; but at the same time he saw her straitened and afflicted with heresies, sins, and great losses. Thereupon, inspired and guided by the Holy Ghost, he established this religious order, this troop and company of soldiers, to be, as he said, like so many light horse, ever ready to rush to the rescue against the sudden onslaughts of the enemy, and to defend and aid our brethren. And therefore he would have us free and disengaged from choir and other offices and observances which might hinder this end. *The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few* (Luke x. 2). How can we have the heart to let our neighbor perish and go to hell when it is in our power to succor him? St. Chrysostom says: "If you saw a blind man likely to fall headlong into a morass, you would lend him a hand; now seeing daily our brethren on the point of falling into the abyss of hell, how can we hold back and fail to stretch out a hand to them?"

Even of those holy Fathers of the Desert, whom God had called to solitude, we read in the Church histories that, when they saw the Church afflicted and persecuted by tyrants and heresies and the faithful ill off for teaching and spiritual succor, they quitted the repose of the desert, and went round making excursions into the towns, answering heretics, teaching the Catholics, and encouraging them to martyrdom. So we read that the great Anthony did in the time of Constantine; as also did another holy man named Acepsemas, who had been previously enclosed for sixty years without seeing or speaking to mortal man. And we read the same of many others. One of these, named Aphraates, gave the Emperor Valens a wonderfully good answer in this matter. This holy man, postponing his own peace and quiet to the salvation of the faithful, had quitted the cave in which he dwelt, and set to work to guide and guard

the Lord's flock. For the emperor had given orders to banish the Catholics, not only from their temples and cities, but even from the mountains, where they used to make their processions, singing hymns and praising God. While Aphraates was thus engaged, he passed one day by the house of the emperor; and someone told Valens: "There goes that Aphraates, of whom all the faithful make so much account." The emperor had him called, and said: "Where are you going?" He answered: "I am going to offer prayer for your empire." The emperor said to him: "You would do better to pray at home, as monks generally do." To which the sagacious man replied: "Certainly you say well; that would be the better course if you left room for it; and so I did all the time that Christ's sheep had the peaceful enjoyment of their pastures; but now that they are in great danger of being stolen or devoured by wolves, one is obliged to rush in all directions to the rescue. Tell me, serene highness, if I were a delicate young girl, and while I sat at my work in my room I saw my father's house on fire, what would be the right thing for me to do? Would it be well for me to sit still, and for my tender years take no heed of the home of my father's being burned, or should I run in search of water to put out the fire? Wherefore, seeing the house of God our Father is now on fire, and that you yourself, sir, have set it on fire, it is to put this fire out that we, who lived before in retirement, now come from all quarters to the rescue."

St. Chrysostom, speaking of the care we ought to have for the salvation of our neighbors, makes use of another very pat comparison. Sailors on the vast ocean, says he, if they catch sight of a wreck a long way off, however good a wind they have to steer on their own course, nevertheless, in disregard of their own advantage, put their ship about, hasten to the spot, take in sail, anchor, and throw out ropes and planks for the drowning mariners to lay hold of and save themselves. So we ought to behave in our navigation

of the wide ocean of this world, swept by many storms, pestered by many rocks and sand-banks, and the scene of so many shipwrecks. So, when you see a fellow voyager in danger, in the waves and tempests of this ocean, leave all your business and fly to his succor, for the necessity of a drowning man brooks no delay.

It was to this end, then, that God our Lord raised up the Society in such calamitous times, to succor and meet the particular need which the Church was then experiencing; it was a great stroke of His providence and a singular act of clemency. Writers of ecclesiastical history have noted and observed very reasonably that on the same day on which Pelagius was born in England to pervert and darken the world with his errors, there was born in Africa Augustine, that great luminary of the Catholic Church, to scatter by his radiant splendor the darkness of a malignant and dangerous heresy. Also the writer of our blessed Father Ignatius' Life observes that in the same year in which that infernal monster, Martin Luther, threw off the mask and began openly to declare war on the Catholic Church by preaching his blasphemies and heresies—it was in the year 1521—that same year God our Lord broke the leg of Ignatius at the castle of Pamplona, to heal him and change him from a dissolute and vain soldier into His captain and leader, and the defender of His Church against Luther. Hereby is seen the providence and clemency of the Lord, always careful to send new succors and reinforcements to His Church in the hour of her greatest need.

That same writer very well enlarges on this subject, and goes on to show how, when the Albigenses and other heretics were most wantonly troubling the peace of the Church, and the thorns of vices and wicked deeds had reached their greatest growth, and were smothering the good seeds which the Heavenly Sower had sown, God sent into the world those seraphs and lights of heaven, St. Dominic and St. Francis, that by themselves and by their sons and disciples

they might withstand heresies, uproot errors, correct sins and reform manners, and enlighten and sanctify the whole world by their admirable example and doctrine, as those holy Fathers did, and their sons are doing at this hour.

God sent to His Church the military orders of knights at the time when she was so close beset by her enemies that it was needful to defend her by force of arms. We may understand the same of the other religious orders, and particularly of the Society of Jesus, of which we are now speaking. For at the time when the heresy of Luther started—who withdrew his obedience from the pope, denied the truth of the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and gave up sacramental confession—in that hour God raised up the Society, which makes particular profession of obedience to the pope, and the professed take a particular vow thereof, and which also takes special care to preach up those holy sacraments of confession and Communion, and to exhort the people to the frequentation of them and the reformation of their manners. As the commander in chief of an army, when he has joined battle with the enemy, from some high and lofty position watches attentively the ebb and flow of the battle, and when and where he sees danger provides for it, now sending on the right wing a troop of light cavalry, now on the left wing a picket of riflemen; so Christ our Lord, Captain General of this Christian army, is at all times watching from the height of heaven the needs of His Church, sending as they require fresh aid of doctors and heads of religious orders to reinforce His army. Here—in the providence and mercy of our Lord clearly shine forth, permitting on the one hand the blow, and on the other bestowing the treatment. This, then, is the end and institution of the Society, and for this we are called to it, as the apostolic bull of its confirmation [by Julius III] says: To defend our holy Catholic faith against heresies, to spread and extend it among the heathen, and to preserve it along with good works among Christian people.

CHAPTER II

Of the Excellence of This Enterprise of Saving Souls, and of Its Great Merit and Value

THIS enterprise of saving souls is so high and exalted that for it the Son of God came down from heaven and became man; for it He chose His apostles, making them, of fishers of fish, fishers of men. There is no office higher than this, says St. Denis the Areopagite: "The highest and most divine ministry and office there is, is to help and co-operate with God to the salvation of souls"—*Omnium divinorum divinissimum est cooperari Deo in salutem animarum*. St. Chrysostom says: "There is nothing more pleasing to God, nothing that He takes more to heart, than the salvation of souls." So the Apostle cries out with loud cries: *Who wisheth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* (I Tim. ii. 4). And the Prophet Ezekiel: *Is the death of the sinner my will, saith the Lord God, and not rather that he be converted from his ways, and live?* (xviii. 23). The Lord wishes all to be saved. He who helps to forward this purpose does the sublimest thing, and the thing most pleasing to God, of all the things that man can do in this life. St. Chrysostom says: "Though you give all your substance to the poor, and that substance be more than the riches of King Solomon and the treasures of Croesus, it is a greater thing to convert one single soul than to do all that." St. Gregory says it is a greater thing to convert a sinner by preaching and prayer than to raise a dead man to life; it is a greater thing, and a thing more regarded by God, than the creation of heaven and earth. Otherwise, look at the cost of it. It cost God nothing but to say the word to create heaven and earth. *He spoke, and all was made: he commanded, and all things were created* (Psalm cxlviii. 5). But that other cost Him more than words; it cost Him His lifeblood. The Apostle St. John

declares to us how precious a work it is before God to be employed in saving souls; or, rather, Christ Himself declares it in these words, speaking in His own person: *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for men, to take it up again in resurrection*, that they also may rise and live forever with Me (John x. 17). The saints here make this reflection, that He did not say, as He might have said: "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because in the beginning He created all things for Me;" but He says that His Father loves Him because He lays down His life for the salvation of souls, to give us to understand how acceptable and agreeable to God that work is.

In this same line of reasoning St. Thomas explains what Christ Himself said a little before: *As my Father knoweth me, so I know my Father; and therefore I lay down my life for my sheep* (John x. 15). St. Thomas says that Christ does not merely mean to say: "I know my Father with full knowledge as He knows Me"—for that He had already said, as appears in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew (xi. 27): *No one knoweth the Son but the Father, and no one knoweth the Father but the Son*—but as, if you asked a good son on earth the reason of what he was doing, he might answer: "I know my father and am aware, as they say, of his likings and wishes," so Christ our Redeemer had said a little before that, like a good shepherd, He would die for His sheep; and then as though they asked Him: "Why, Lord, do you offer so precious a life as Yours for a thing of such little value and price?" He answers: *I know my Father* (John x. 15). It is as though He would say: "I know very well the will of my Father and the love that He has for those sheep; and therefore with hearty good will I give my life for them, for I know that such is His pleasure." That is what should make us also busy ourselves with hearty good will over the salvation of souls, knowing that that is to the liking and satisfaction of God, and that His Divine Majesty greatly loves our being so occupied.

St. Chrysostom also reflects to this effect on what Christ our Redeemer said to St. Peter when, having asked him three times if he loved Him, all three times He went on to say: "If you love Me, feed My lambs and My sheep" (John xxi. 15-17). That was equivalent to saying: "I want you to exercise and show the love that you bear Me, by helping Me in this work of saving the souls whom I have redeemed with My blood."

The high excellence of this work and the extreme satisfaction which it gives to God, may also be seen in Christ Himself first and foremost, since for this act of giving His life for men the Apostle St. Paul says that the eternal Father has raised, glorified, and exalted Him above all things. *He gave him a name that is above every name, a name at which every knee should bow in heaven, on earth, and in hell* (Phil. ii. 9-10). The Prophet David says the same: *Because he drank of the torrent, he hath lifted up his head* (Psalm cix. 7). And the Prophet Isaias: *If he shall lay down his life for sinners, he shall see sons and descendants that shall endure for long ages* (Isaias liii. 16). Because He laid down His life for sinners and suffered so much for them, therefore has the eternal Father so highly exalted and glorified Him.

St. Gregory on those words of the Apostle: *He that converteth a sinner from his evil ways and errors, shall deliver his own soul from death, and cover the multitude of his sins* (James v. 20), says: "If to deliver a man from bodily death, who though he die not today has to die tomorrow, deserves a great reward and recompense, what reward and recompense must he deserve who has delivered a soul from everlasting death, and is the cause of her living in glory forever, a glory which she can never lose!" Thus Holy Writ is not content with saying that they who preach Christ and teach men the way of their salvation shall attain to life everlasting—*They who make me known to others shall gain eternal life* (Ecclus. xxiv. 31)—but adds:

They shall shine as stars for all eternity (Dan. xii. 3); they shall be there in heaven like a moon and like a sun. Therefore God says by the Prophet Jeremy (xv. 19): *If thou separatest what is precious from what is vile*, if thou removest the souls whom I value so much from the vileness and baseness of sin, *thou shalt be as my mouth*. It is a common way of speaking, when one greatly cherishes another, to say: "I cherish him as my eyes and as my life." In that way, then, does God cherish him who goes about converting souls and drawing them out of sin. A soul is a most precious thing before God; therefore does He set so much store on help rendered to souls. It is written of St. Catherine of Siena in her Life that, when she saw a preacher pass along the street, she would go out of her house and kiss with great devotion the ground that the preacher had trodden on. Being asked why she did that, she replied that God had given her to know the beauty of souls in grace, and therefore she held them to be so happy who are engaged in this business of preaching that she could not refrain from putting her mouth where they had put their feet, and kissing the ground they trod on.

To this high dignity, then, the Lord has raised us. For this He has called and drawn us to the Society; this is our end and institute, to be fellow workers with God in the highest and divinest of works, which is the salvation of souls: *We are God's fellow workers*, says St. Paul (I Cor. iii. 9). *Let men hold us to be ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God* (I Cor. iv. 1). An apostolic office, an office for which God Himself came down from heaven and gave His lifeblood, an office for which we are called *sons of God*! *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God* (Matt. v. 9). On this text St. Jerome, Theophylact, and others say that these peacemakers are not only they who are at peace within themselves, having gained the victory over their passions, and again they who make peace and effect reconciliations

between their neighbors, but also they who make peace and reconciliations between God and men, converting sinners by their teaching and bringing them back into grace with God. Blessed, then, are these peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God, since such was the office of the Son of God, *making peace through the blood of his cross between what is on earth and what is in heaven* (Col. i. 20); for the Son of God came down from heaven to earth to reconcile men with God, to make peace and friendship between God and men. Therefore the angels sang at His birth: *Glory be to God in the heavens, and on earth peace to men of good will* (Luke ii. 14).

The lessons we should thence learn for our own spiritual advancement are: first, a great affection for our ministries and devotion to them, as being so exalted, so pleasing to God, and so profitable to our neighbor; secondly, a great sense of shame at God's having called us, being what we are, to a rank so high and lofty; and whereas I am not in a position to give a good account of myself alone, God has over and above entrusted to me and put in my hands the salvation and perfection of others. It is a wonderful good piece of advice that that apostolic man, our Father Francis Xavier gave, like a veteran and experienced soldier, in a letter he wrote to the fathers and brothers of Portugal. He says to them: "I advise you, my brothers, never to touch upon the office and ministry that you hold, nor upon the good opinion and esteem that the world has of you, except to turn it to your confusion, according to that saying of the prophet: *When they exalted me, then I humbled myself more, and went about in greater shame and fear* (Psalm lxxxvii. 16)." The higher the office to which God has called you, the more you ought to humble yourself.

An ancient father, very distinguished for learning and virtue [Father Jerome Nadal] used to say that, when he considered the high purpose and end of the Society and looked at himself, he felt so ashamed, seeing how insuffi-

cient and unworthy he was, that not only he felt no pride in seeing himself called to so exalted a function, but on the contrary it was an occasion to him of greater shame and humiliation. In this way the high state we are in will do us no harm, nor the opinion of our holiness that the world entertains, nor the honor done us on that account. The third lesson that we have to learn is to apply ourselves in good earnest to our own spiritual advancement, for to deal with our neighbor and make a better man of him, a great foundation of virtue is necessary, as we shall say afterwards.

CHAPTER III

That This Enterprise Belongs to All Members of the Society, and that All Have Their Share in It, Even though They Be Not Priests

SINCE some heart perhaps may be melancholy, thinking that the end of which we have spoken is only for priests, who hear confessions and preach and have such immediate dealings with their neighbor, we will give some explanation here for the consolation of those who serve and help in temporal and exterior offices. This end and enterprise belongs to all who are in the Society, and not only to priests and men in their studies. Thus all should know to what end their labors are directed, of whatever sort they be, and the value and merit of them, and thus be better disposed to do them. We all make one body, one order, one Society; and the end of all this body and Society is what we have said, to attend not only to our own advancement and perfection by the grace of God, but also to attend to the salvation and perfection of our neighbor. For the compassing and attaining of this end proper to our order, some must be preachers, others confessors, others lecturers, and others coadjutors to aid in outward offices.

So in war, for the gaining of victory, it is needful for some to fight and others to guard the baggage. The latter aid the former to fight and gain the victory, and deserve no less reward and remuneration than those who fight. As David said: *Equal shall be the portion of him who goes down to battle and of him who stays with the baggage; and they shall share alike in the division of the spoil* (I Kings xxx. 24). Holy Writ says that this is a standing rule in Israel to this day, and with reason, for they are all one army, and for the gaining of the victory the one is as necessary as the other; the one party could not fight if the other did not stay on guard with the baggage. So it is here; we all make one body, one army, one company and troop of soldiers of Christ, for this enterprise of the conversion of souls. This man could not preach, nor that other hear confessions, nor that other lecture or study, if there were not someone to remain in charge of the temporalities. Thus he who minds the latter helps in preaching and in hearing confessions and in saving souls, and has his share in the victory and fruit that is won. St. Augustine says that at the death of St. Stephen, the first martyr, while others were stoning him, Paul was keeping their clothes, and thereby did more than all the rest, since he kept the clothes of them all. If we may say this of an evil deed, much more may we say it of a good deed, since God is more inclined to reward than to punish.

Father Master Avila, in a letter that he wrote to two priests who were on the point of entering the Society, being already missionaries and coming to a Society which makes that its profession, tells them not to fix their minds on rendering spiritual aid to their neighbor, nor be troubled at their not being employed in such ministries, since in the Society all that is done, down to the washing of dishes in the kitchen, is, he says, for the saving of souls. The saving of souls being the end of this order, and great profit of souls depending upon its preservation and in-

crease, all that is done to preserve and increase this Society, though it be the discharge of very humble offices, counts for the conversion of souls, and should be done very cheerfully. Members as we are of this body and this order, every one of us by doing his duty and fulfilling his office helps to the fruit and profit that is made in the body, and so is partaker in the conversions and good works that are wrought throughout the whole Society. Our Father lays this down expressly in the Constitutions, speaking of the temporal coadjutors. So each one should be highly content and comforted in his office, taking it for a great blessing to be a member of this body of the Society, in which God is so well served and so much help is given to souls. Thus in the Society everything is the conversion of souls, the being cook, the being porter, the being sacristan, because the end of it all is converting souls, and whatever helps the Society helps to that end.

This may be put in a clearer light. For if it were only to preachers, confessors, and others who are immediately occupied with their neighbor's salvation that this glory belonged, and to them alone were to be attributed the good that is done to our neighbor, the people who would have most reason to be unhappy in their life in the Society would be superiors; for it is they who are least able to attend to these particular ministries, as the General and the Provincials, for they have quite enough to do in visiting provinces, answering letters, and conducting affairs, without their having any time left to occupy themselves with the good and utility of their neighbor. But the superior does more to help his neighbor by doing his office well and superintending the spiritual laborers who are under his charge, seeing that they all go on as they ought, than he would by hearing confessions or preaching as a private. The master or foreman of works does more than any single workman, in taking care that all do their duty. The commanding officer in war does more by arranging what has to be done

than he would do by fighting as a private soldier—or, rather, he does all that the rest do by this helping and directing of all, and therefore the victory is attributed to him. In this way, he that is in the sacristy, and he that is in the porter's lodge and the other offices, gains souls as well as the preacher and the confessor, because he helps them and leaves them free so that they can exercise these ministries, which otherwise they could not.

This is the meaning of our all being one body, and all members of that body. As the members of the body have not all the same function, but each has its own, and yet the function which each member discharges, it does not discharge for itself alone, but for the whole man—the feet do not walk for themselves alone; the hands do not work for themselves alone; the mouth does not eat for itself alone, but for the whole man, and so of the rest—so it is in this mystical body of religion. This is a metaphor and comparison applied by the Apostle St. Paul to this same purpose, speaking of the Church. *The body is one and yet hath many members: and all these members make but one body. If the foot saith that it is not of the body, because it is not the hand, is it not therefore of the body? And if the ear saith it is not of the body, because it is not the eye: does it for this reason cease to be of the body? If the body were all eye, where would the sense of hearing be? And if it were all ear, what would become of the sense of smell? So God hath placed each member in the body after such a manner as he thought fit; and the eye cannot say to the hand: I want not your help; nor the head in like manner say to the feet: I have no need of you. God hath placed in his Church in the first place, apostles: in the second prophets: in the third place, doctors. To some he hath given the grace of healing, and to others the speaking of divers tongues (I Cor. xii. 14-28). But it is always one and the selfsame spirit that worketh all these things, distributing to each one as he pleaseth (I Cor. xii. 11). It is the*

same in a religious body; not all can be eyes, nor tongues, nor ears; all cannot be superiors, preachers, and confessors; there must also be in the body hands and feet; *and the eye cannot say to the hand: I want not your help; nor the head say to the feet: I have no need of you;* because all these offices are necessary for gaining our end. And thus the fruit that is produced in the Society is produced by all.

In the second place, all members of the Society, brothers as well as fathers, help and should help to the salvation of souls, not only in the manner said—and by the example of their good and holy lives, which, as we shall say afterwards, is a chief and very powerful means to this end—but also by their words in familiar conversation and dealing with their neighbor, saying good and profitable things for the salvation of their souls. This is a means productive of much fruit, and our holy Father in the Seventh Part of his Constitutions, speaking of the means whereby we are to help our neighbor, places this among the first. He sets it down for a general means which all those of the Society are to contrive to apply, even though they be lay brothers, and then he specifies expressly; and that we might understand and practise this the better, he has placed it among the rules. “Let all according to their state, when occasion offers, endeavor to improve their neighbor by pious conversations, and to advise and exhort him to good works, especially to confession.” Thus not only the preacher and the confessor, but the caterer, accountant, porter, companion, are to contrive to help their neighbor by good conversation, speaking on occasion to people of things profitable to their souls; to one, of the devotion of the rosary; to another, against swearing; to another, of confession; to another, a little more advanced, of examination of conscience every night. We know of sundry lay brothers who have done much good to those they met by their good talks and conversation, and drawn many to confession, and gained many souls to God, more perhaps than sundry preachers and confessors.

In the third place, all help to the conversion of souls by their prayers, which is one of the principal means to that end, as we shall say afterwards, and belongs to all. Many a time a preacher, or a confessor, or one who goes to assist the dying, will think that he is doing good, and all the while it may be that the good is done by his lay brother companion, who has commended the matter to God, or by the cook, who took the discipline the night before the sermon, begging God our Lord to convert some soul. Oh, how many spiritual children are the lay brothers destined to take away from preachers and confessors, children which they thought were their own, and in the day of judgment it will be seen that they were not theirs, but belonged to the lay brothers! Joseph is not the father of the Child, only His putative father—*he being, as was thought, the son of Joseph* (Luke iii. 23). They seemed to be the spiritual children of the preacher or the confessor, and people thought that these were their spiritual fathers; and they are afterwards found to be children of tears, children of the prayers of the lay brother. He that appeared sterile shall have many children; and he that had the name of father and seemed to have many sons shall find himself perhaps without any (I Kings ii. 5). Rejoice and be glad, ye that appear sterile; for if you do what you ought, it may be that you will have more spiritual children than the preachers and confessors, and you will be astonished afterwards to find yourself with so many sons (Isaias liv. 1; Gal. iv. 27). The Prophet Isaias says: *Who hath begotten to me all these children?* I am not a preacher, I am not a confessor. I am not learned, *and who hath given me these?* (Isaias xlix. 21). Do you know who? Prayer, sighs, tears, and groans. *God hath heard the desire of the poor, the prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds.* God complies with the will of them that fear Him and grants them what they ask. This it is that gives so many children to him who appeared sterile, and did not bear the name of father.

From this consideration Father Francis Xavier used to say that preachers and confessors should be helped, in one way, not to esteem themselves more than their brethren, thinking that they are doing more good and working more; and in another way, to keep greater union and charity among themselves.

There is another advantage which the brothers have herein, and it is this. When they produce fruit in souls in the manner we have said, they are safer than preachers and confessors and lecturers; because the preacher and the lecturer are in great danger of vainglory, and the confessor runs the risk of being right or wrong in his decisions. And besides, these ministries carry with them great cares and embarrassments, insomuch that sometimes, in their anxiety to discharge them, people forget themselves and their own spiritual advancement; while the brothers have their business and their merit and their gain secure; they are free from that vanity, from those cares and scruples. Thus the brothers share with us the enterprise, and often bear the better part in it: but they do not share with us the loss; that falls upon us alone. God grant that it may not happen sometimes that the preacher gets the vainglory, and the lay brother all the profit and fruit that is gained! That would not be a fair division; rather let us all rejoice in the fruit of our labor, doing ever all things to the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER IV

How Necessary It Is for This End First to Ground Ourselves Right Well in Virtue

THESE two things that we have said, our own improvement and the help and improvement of our neighbor, make one and the same end in the Society; they are so conjoined and interlaced together that the one is adapted

to the other, helps it, and is necessary for it. So we see that the Society uses different means for the improvement of her members from those that are used by other religious orders in which the help of their neighbor is no part of their institute. Our blessed Father Ignatius used to say that, if he had looked only to God and our private spiritual advancement, he would have prescribed certain things in the Society which he omitted to prescribe, for the regard he had for our neighbor for the love of God Himself. He added that, if he looked to himself alone, he would go through the streets naked, tarred with feathers and covered with mud, to make sport of the world and for the world to make sport of him. But the great desire that he had of helping his neighbor repressed in him this impulse of humility, and made him carry himself with the authority and decency which his office and person required, and omit those extraordinary mortifications. And if he followed his natural taste and inclinations, and the spiritual profit which he drew from the ecclesiastical chant, he says that he would have established choir in the Society; but he omitted to establish it because, he said, the Lord had taught him that He wished to make use of us in other ministries and different exercises.

Since the Society aims not only at its own improvement, but also at that of its neighbor, it gives us the necessary means for our own personal progress after such a manner that they shall also dispose and fit us to help and improve our neighbors. It also wishes that our ministerial duties in aid of our neighbor should be helps to our own advancement in perfection, and that we should understand that our own growth in virtue consists in doing them well. Thus the ministrations that we exercise on behalf of our neighbor we should take as means to our own spiritual progress; and the grace and aid which our Lord gives us for our spiritual growth and improvement is with a view to our neighbor, that so we may better aid and advance him; and if we were

not to work at that we should deserve that the fountain and stream of the gifts of God should dry up, because for this it flows and this is the grace of our vocation.

Joseph's being raised up and seated on the throne of Egypt, and having given him the gifts which were given, was not for his private dignity and advancement, but for the good and advancement of his brethren and people. *It was for the saving of you that God sent me before you* (Gen. xlv. 5). So also in our case God has called us to this state, and in it gives us such blessings, for the good and profit of our brethren; therefore Christ compares us to a light and to a city, since all the coming forth of light is for others.

But let us speak of each of these two parts by itself, although always with reference to the other. As for the first, it is certain that, for a man to be able to do much for the help and improvement of his neighbor, he must first be greatly helped and improved himself. So the Apostle puts in the first place, as the foundation of the rest, *Attend to thyself* (I Tim. iv. 16). The first thing to be done is for each one to look to himself, and apply himself in earnest to his spiritual advancement. God our Lord orders spiritual things and the operations of grace according to the operations of nature. *The Divine Wisdom reacheth from end to end strongly, and disposeth all things sweetly* (Wisdom viii. 1); and to show that He is the author both of the one and of the other, God wills that in the operations of grace there should be observed the same order as in the operations of nature, wherein, as philosophers say, like begets like.

Besides general causes, as the sun and the heavenly spheres, we see that for the production of natural things there is required as a further cause an immediate agent of the same species, that so a thing may have the form which it has to transmit to other subjects. Fire produces fire; light, light. It is the same with spiritual things. To put into others the form of humility, patience, charity, and the

other virtues, God requires the immediate cause which He uses as an instrument—a preacher or a confessor—to be humble, patient, and charitable.

Moreover, as we see in the course of nature that a plant, say, a lettuce, does not produce seed while it is small, but only when it is grown to maturity—then does it begin to shed its seed, to multiply itself in others—so in the things of the spirit and of grace God requires a man first to be well advanced and grown in virtue into a perfect man before begetting spiritual sons to God and being able to say: *In Christ Jesus through the gospel I have begotten you* (I Cor. iv. 15). For this reason the first thing the Society takes in hand is to attend to ourselves and to our own spiritual advancement; it would have its subject well grounded in this first of all. To this end there is such a long probation in the Society; two years of novitiate to begin with, before starting the studies; and when these are over, she puts her men once more into the furnace and the mold, keeping them another whole year in probation, that in case study and speculation have dried up and cooled any of their spirit and devotion, they may refit themselves once more, now that they are on the point of entering upon their ministry to their neighbor, and not treat of matters of the spirit without themselves having the spirit. And even after that it seems that we are never to cease being novices; our profession is put off for so many years that one may say our whole life is spent in novitiate and probation before the Society gives a man his grade as a formed workman in its service. Much is to be entrusted to him, and so he must be much proved and tried first for all he is worth; he is to be put to high things, dealing with others to make them not only good, but perfect, and so it is necessary that he himself be perfect.

Hence it will be seen how great is the mistake of those to whom these probations appear long, and who even fancy that their time is lost in them, and would like to see them-

selves already preaching and dealing with their neighbor. The moment they get a little devotion in meditation, or one or two good thoughts, they would fain be in the pulpit. The holy Abbot Ephrem lamented this, and says that this is not the spirit of God, but the spirit of pride and vanity. You have come, he says, into religion to be taught and instructed, and scarcely have you commenced to learn when you want to teach others. You can hardly put two syllables together, and you want to be a schoolmaster. You cannot yet bear a reproof or take an admonition given you, and you want to be rebuking others and dealing out to them counsel and advice. *Antequam doceatur, docere appetit; priusquam discat, iura legesque ferre ambit; antequam syllabas iungere noverit, philosophatur; priusquam corripi sustineat, corripit.*

St. Gregory, in his "Pastoral Cure," treats this subject excellently, illustrating it by familiar comparisons. It is necessary, he says, to admonish these folk to observe and consider that nestlings, trying to fly before their wings grow, instead of going up, fall down; and secondly to observe and consider that, if fresh and new-built walls are loaded immediately, the whole building will fall, and they who so proceed, instead of raising buildings, will prepare ruins. The walls must dry and the building set, before it is fit to bear the weight that is to be laid upon it. Thirdly, he says, they must likewise observe and consider that women who are brought to bed before their time, and before the babe in the womb is quite formed, do not fill with their issue the houses of the living, but the tombs of the dead. A great foundation of virtue and mortification is needed to deal with our neighbor; without that, there will be more danger than profit. They will infect us with their evil communications sooner than our goodness shall impress them. Hence it is, says St. Gregory, that Christ Himself, though He was the Wisdom of the eternal Father, and wisdom was His as perfectly in the instant of His conception

as afterwards, would not begin preaching till He was thirty years old; and then the first thing He did was to retire into the desert, fasting and practising other corporal austerities, and being tempted by the devil, to give us an example of the great preparation and perfection that are required for so high a ministry, although He had no need of these previous preparations Himself. And he there brings in very well what is said of Him in the holy Gospel, that, when at the age of twelve years He stayed behind in Jerusalem, *they found him in the Temple seated in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions* (Luke ii. 46). Observe, he says, and ponder attentively how, when Jesus Christ was twelve years old, His parents found Him in the Temple, seated in the midst of the doctors, not teaching, but listening and asking questions, this to teach us that he who is yet a child and imperfect in virtue should not dare to teach, nor take on himself before his time an office so high, since He Himself at that age would not teach, but only listen and ask questions, although it was He Who gave wisdom and knowledge to those doctors, being true God as He was. Hence also it was, says St. Gregory, that, when He had commanded His apostles and disciples to go and preach the Gospel all over the world, though He could have given them at once the virtue and perfection necessary for so doing, He did not give it, nor would He have them preach in the weak and imperfect state in which they were, but said to them: *Do ye tarry in the city, until ye are endowed with virtue from on high* (Luke xxiv. 49). Stay in the city until the Holy Spirit comes upon you. All that goes to teach us the necessity there is of being well grounded in virtue, humility, and mortification, to be able to go out and deal with our neighbors with profit to them and without injury to ourselves.

The glorious St. Bernard cites to this purpose the text of Canticles (viii. 8): *Our sister is small, and hath not yet breasts*: she has not yet milk to be able to rear children.

He takes these words to refer to the Church before the coming of the Holy Ghost; and says that then the Church was small, and had not breasts nor milk to be able to rear children, until the Holy Ghost came, Who filled the apostles and disciples with His gifts and graces and gave them abundant milk. *They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to utter the great things of God* (Acts ii. 4-11). Then, filled with the Holy Ghost, they spoke wonders, and converted people in thousands. If, then, you wish to produce fruit in souls and rear spiritual children for God, you must have your breasts very full and well stored with good milk, the one breast with much virtue, the other with right-down good and sound doctrine.

St. Jerome on that text of Ecclesiastes (xi. 3): *If the clouds be full, they will pour rain upon the earth*, says that preachers are clouds, since as clouds are charged with water wherewith they moisten the earth, so preachers are they who are charged with the water of Gospel teaching, and with that they moisten the dry hearts of men. Quoting Isaias (v. 6): *I will bid the clouds not to rain upon it*, he says that this is the punishment that God threatens men for their sins, to hold up the rain of His word, and not send preachers at all or permit the preachers to be such as will not preach profitably. And this is one of the greatest punishments that God can inflict on His people. But when these clouds are quite full of rain from heaven, they will be able to rain and shed their water over the earth, and say: *Let the earth hear the words of my mouth, let my doctrine gather like rain, let my speech pour out as dew, as rain upon the grass* (Deut. xxxii. 2). Then they will be able to fertilize the earth, to soften and move men's hearts to compunction, that they may yield fruit of good works; for if clouds have no water in them, what shall become of them? Do you know what? What the holy Apostle Jude says in his canonical epistle. *They are as clouds without water, that are carried round by the winds*

(Jude i. 12). As clouds without water, light and airy, and having no weight nor substance in them, are easily carried away by the wind in one direction or another, so if you are not full and replenished with virtue, humility, and mortification, the wind of vanity and reputation and the other passions and cupidities of the world will carry you away like a cloud without water and without weight, and your quality of cloud, charged with high ministries and duties, will serve only to make you more vain, the sport of all the winds that blow.

Speaking of rich people, St. Augustine says: "It is hard for a rich man not to be proud; there is nothing that riches so readily create and engender as pride. All things breed their own maggot, which gnaws and wastes them. Cloth breeds and engenders its moth, timber its wood louse, wheat its weevil. The maggot of the apple tree is different from that of the pear, and that of the wheat from that of the bean; so riches engender another maggot, very different from these and worse than them all, and that is pride." The rich men of the world, seeing the extent of their property and riches and the esteem that men have of them and the account that they make of them, are in all the greater danger of pride on that account. How much greater must be the danger of those who play the part of clouds, soaring over the earth, watering it and giving it blessing; respected by all for the lofty and high ministries which they hold, honored and esteemed by all the world, great and small, with all possible honor and reverence? St. Chrysostom says that greater reverence is due to priests than to kings and princes, and even to our own earthly parents, since they make us live in the world, but priests and spiritual fathers make us live to God. There is no greater honor, no higher estimation, than a reputation for sanctity. To others we pay exterior honor while often at heart we have no respect for them at all, but these we honor as saints. *Bow down thy soul to a priest, and to a magnate bow down*

thy head, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. iv. 7). A strong foundation of humility is necessary to bear the weight of all this honor; pride and vainglory is the maggot which destroys and ruins good works; and in the highest and most distinguished there is greater danger of this maggot's being engendered. So this is the first danger that St. Chrysostom reckons in the priestly state, and he says that it is a reef more formidable than any that poets imagine.

CHAPTER V

*That Not Only Ought We Not to Neglect Our Own
Advancement to Help Our Neighbor, but We Need
to Be More Careful of It and More Diligent
about It on His Account*

RECOVER *thy neighbor according to thy strength, and look to thyself that thou fall not in*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxix. 26). This is the end and institute of the Society, and the royal road for us to travel by. From this royal road we may diverge in two ways: one to the right, by withdrawing entirely from all intercourse with our neighbor to attend to our own improvement; the other to the left, by giving so much attention to our neighbor as to forget ourselves. Both these extremes are vicious and dangerous. We will speak shortly of both of them, that we may hit the mean, in which virtue and perfection lie. To begin with the more dangerous extreme, which is that of giving ourselves over so entirely to our neighbor as to forget ourselves, Christ our Redeemer warns us of this, saying: *What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man make for his soul?* (Matt. xvi. 26). There is no compensation that can compensate for the loss of that. Thus reason and charity alike require that for no occupations should we drop the care of our own souls, nor go slack over

our own improvement, since well-ordered charity begins at home. This is the first thing that the prophet begs God to teach him. *Teach me, O Lord, goodness, discipline, and knowledge* (Psalm cxviii. 26). He puts goodness in the first place. No one should forget or neglect himself under pretense of helping and advancing his neighbor; that would be a great error. Even the heathen Seneca said that such as neglect themselves for the sake of others are like wells that give to others their clear water, and keep the dregs and the mud for themselves. Pope Nicholas in a decree has another comparison, which further illustrates this point. Arguing that bad priests can administer the sacraments, inasmuch as thereby they harm only themselves, he says they are like a lighted torch, which benefits others and gives them light, while it wastes away and consumes itself.

St. Bernard on those words of the Canticles: *Thy name is as oil poured out* (Cant. i. 2), expatiates very well on this point. He lays down two works that the Holy Ghost does in us; the one is giving us our first start in virtue for our own profit, and that he calls *infusion*; the other is imparting to us gifts and graces for the benefit and profit of our neighbor, which he calls *effusion*, because it is given to us to pour out and impart to others. Infusion, he says, must come first, and then effusion. The first thing is to receive into ourselves and become quite full of virtue, then to pour out and impart the same to others. He draws a comparison which illustrates the matter well. If you have judgment and understanding, you must contrive to be a bowl, and not a pipe. There is this difference between the pipe and the bowl or basin of the fountain, that the pipe passes the water at once upon receiving it, without keeping it, while the bowl or basin of the fountain, which is closed all round, first gets filled itself and then, when it is filled, what there is over, it shares and imparts without losing or diminishing aught of its own. Thus, then, you must contrive to be, not a pipe, but like the basin of the fountain.

And, says St. Bernard, that you may not think that what I say is my own invention and make light of it accordingly, you must know that it is not mine, but of the Holy Ghost, Who tells us by the Wise Man: *The fool brings out his whole mind, but the wise man keeps back and reserves some for the future* (Prov. xxix. 11). The fool pours it all out like a pipe, but the wise man delays and keeps something to himself for afterwards; he seeks to be himself first well replenished and full as a bowl. But, alas, facts go the other way about! At this day there are very few bowls in the Church, but a great many pipes, ready to pass on the water of the word of God to others, and water the earth of their hearts, making it green and fresh and fruitful, while they themselves remain dry and barren. *Canales multos hodie habemus in Ecclesia, conchas vero perpaucas*. These folk are so charitable, he says ironically, that they would fain give out before gathering; having nothing for themselves, they want to give to others. They are prompter and more disposed to speak than to listen, and would willingly teach what they have not learned; they would like to govern and rule others, while they cannot govern themselves. This is not charity, for no degree of charity can take priority over what the Wise Man says: *Have pity on thine own soul, pleasing God* (Ecclus. xxx. 24). This is the first step, to have pity on our own soul, our very own, by endeavoring to serve and greatly please God; after that must come our efforts to help and cure others. "If I have only a little oil for myself, do you think I am going to give it to you and have nothing left for myself? I am keeping it for myself," as that widow answered (III Kings xvii. 12), and except at the bidding of the prophet I will not give it away. And if any importune me, taking me for more than I am worth and thinking I have enough to share, I have my answer for them: *Lest perchance there be not enough for you and for me, go rather to them that sell* (Matt. xxv. 9) and have abundance, for it is not reasonable that I be left poor and empty-handed to give to you.

It is not meant that others should have relief and you affliction, but that there should be equality (II Cor. viii. 13), says St. Paul. That other is not good charity; it is enough that you love your neighbor as you love yourself; that is the commandment of God (Matt. xxii. 39). And so St. Paul says: *There should be equality*. Do not love your neighbor more than yourself; do not lose yourself and your own spiritual advancement to attend to the advancement of your neighbor; do not be careless of yourself to take care of others. That would not be good charity. *Let my soul be full of thy grace, as of rich and nourishing food, and my mouth and my lips shall praise thee for joy*, says the Prophet David (Psalm lxii. 6). You yourself must first be filled to the full and made rich, that out of the abundance of your heart your mouth may speak. *Therefore it is needful*, says the Apostle, *that we should attend very diligently to the things that we have heard, that we should not be emptied out of all and lose them* (Heb. ii. 1). We must look to it carefully that all the liquor of heaven does not leak away from us, but keep it first for ourselves—overflow certainly, but not leak.

Not only must we not neglect our own improvement to help our neighbor, but for that very end we need to be more careful and diligent about it. Great is the stock of virtue and mortification that is required to deal with people of the world, that they may not infect us with their bad tastes and make us take up their manners rather than they ours. *He that toucheth pitch shall be defiled*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xiii. 1). He that has to do with pitch must be very careful not to get any on his hands; he must keep his hands well bathed in oil. So for us to deal with worldly folk, we must always be full of God and bathed in prayer, otherwise we may reasonably fear that the pitch will stick to our hands, and those folk will carry us over to their side and infect us with their bad tastes and ill habits.

One of the chief admonitions that our blessed Father

Ignatius, as we read in his Life, used to give to those who had business with their neighbor, was to be fully convinced that they were not living nor dealing with perfect men, but going among a race not holy, and often unjust and deceitful, *in the midst of a depraved and perverse nation*, as St. Paul says (Phil. ii. 15). And this admonition is of great importance, to make us keep well on our guard, armed and cautious, that the evils and scandals that we witness may not infect and take hold of us. Medical men and those who tend the sick, especially in cases of a contagious malady, are wont to carry with them many perfumes and preservatives, that the disease may not catch them, nor that exhalation and bad odor that comes from their patients infect them. Now our business is with the sick, and with the sick of a contagious disease that may infect and lay hold of us if we are not well fortified with prophylactics and preservatives of high virtue, prayer, and mortification. It readily appears what a good and healthy stomach the confessor and missionary must have, whose hands are in continual contact with putrid and stinking sores, not to have his stomach turned by the stench of sins heard in confession, and a pool stirred within him of evil thoughts and movements.

They say very well that we must be like certain rivers there are, that enter into the midst of the sea and keep their water fresh without any intermixture of the salt sea water. St. Chrysostom, speaking of what priests ought to be who have to live in the world and mix with their neighbor, says that their souls should be as the bodies of those three children of Babylon, unburned in the midst of the furnace. We walk among flames, not of straw or tow, but fiercer than those of the Babylonian furnace. Here darts out a flash of envy, there one of ambition, and there another of sensuality; here one caused by those who form rash judgments and tell tales about me. Now you must be such as not to burn in the midst of these flames. And since fire makes its way in at every opening given to it, and leaves

what it finds blackened and disfigured, beautiful though it were before, the priest of God, says the saint, must be so much on his guard that not even the smoke may touch him. Very much on his guard must one be, not to burn in the midst of so many devouring fires, and not so much as to be tarnished and speckled by the smoke. Still better does Christ our Redeemer warn us of this, saying: *Ye are the light of the world* (Matt. v. 14). Light, says St. Augustine, passes through unclean places and by dunghills without contamination or infection; rather it cleanses, purifies, and disinfects them without receiving any taint itself. So we should pass by these dunghills and cesspools of sinners and sins, noisome and filthy as they are, without their affecting us, but rather cleansing and drying them up and taking away their bad odor, as does the light of the sun.

We must, therefore, always have a great care of our spiritual duties, meditation, examens, spiritual reading, penance, and mortification. We should never leave out the ordinary meditation that we have in the Society for our spiritual profit. We must make great account of this, since the devil, seeing that he cannot hinder us from helping our neighbor, that being our end and institute, endeavors to get us to devote ourselves to it and be absorbed in it to such an extent as to forget ourselves and neglect the means necessary for our own profit and preservation. When a river goes out of its bed, it fertilizes the lands by which it passes, and gathers into itself all their filth; that is the devil's object in getting us to give ourselves without moderation to looking after our neighbor. This is apt to be a very common temptation, and so it is necessary to be very well fortified against it, all the more seeing that, as we shall say presently, the chief means that we can take to that very end of benefiting our neighbors and doing them much good, is to take care of our own spiritual advancement. The more numerous our occupations, the greater need we have of prayer and recourse to God, to do them well as the saints did.

We read of the blessed St. Dominic that he made such a division of his time as to spend the day on his neighbor and the night with God. That is how his teaching was productive of so great fruit, because at nighttime he arranged with God what he was to do during the day; he first concluded his business with God, and then concluded it with men. And Christ our Lord gave us the example of this, so many times spending whole nights in prayer in lonely places, persevering in prayer, as the evangelists write. He spent the days in going up and down, preaching and teaching and curing the sick and possessed persons, and during the nights He kept watch and persevered in prayer: *erat pernoctans in oratione Dei* (Luke vi. 12); not that He had need of this precaution as St. Ambrose notes, but to give us an example.

We must be particularly careful on this point when we are out of our own houses. The rules of those who go on missions take special notice of this: "Let them who go out be on their guard not to omit the spiritual duties usual at home" (Rule 26). With good reason is it said, "be on their guard," because certainly it is very necessary to take particular care not to fail on this point when we are out of our houses. At home, on the one hand our occupations are more moderate; and on the other there is the bell to call me to meditation and examen, and the sight of all the others doing that goes to make me do the same. But when you go out of the house, on the one hand there come extraordinary occupations wearying and overwhelming you; and on the other, as you hear no bell, nor have the sight of the example of others to help you, but rather many hindrances and distractions, if you do not use great care and diligence, your spiritual duties will often be left out. That is why well-trained men are needed to go on the missions. Our Father Francis Borgia used to say that he was never satisfied with any mission that he sent out except when it gave him a great deal of pain; and the pain was the parting with

the men of the stamp of those that were needed, and whom he usually selected for such undertakings. Much more is needed to go abroad than to stay at home; that is why missions are the proper work of the professed of four vows, who are supposed to be men well proved and advanced in virtue. And withal it is necessary that they should not stay too long on the missions, but at stated periods return to the house to recollect themselves and refit, that the spirit may not be overwhelmed and exhausted by so much occupation.

Hence we may learn that, if this is to be said of spiritual ministrations in aid of souls—that we are not for them to leave out our meditation, or examens, or other ordinary duties regarding our own spiritual good, since it is no good charity to neglect and forget oneself to attend to others—it is plain what is to be thought of material and exterior occupations, temporal duties and affairs, whether carried on by seculars or religious; for this doctrine concerns all, and everyone may apply it to himself according to his state. A man should never become so entangled and absorbed in exterior occupations, however good they be and proper to his state, as on that account to forget his salvation or, if he is a religious, to forget his meditation, his examen, and the rest of what bears on his spiritual progress and mortification; the greater in all reason should not be abandoned for the less. We should always put in the first place what touches our own spiritual advancement; such is the will of God and of our superiors. A student should not drop or curtail his spiritual duties for his studies. Little will it profit him to turn out a great doctor if he does not turn out a good religious. The more so, as ordinary observance of spiritual duties will not hinder studies, but rather further them much, the Lord giving light and understanding to improve in studies.

We read of Albertus Magnus that he used often to say to his scholars, and he has left it written at the beginning

of his "Summa," that the divine sciences are learned better by prayer and devotion than by study; and he used to quote to this effect the words of Solomon: *I desired, and there was given me understanding; I invoked, and there came on me the spirit of wisdom* (Wisdom vii. 7). And St. Thomas Aquinas, who was his pupil, came by this means to know and understand so much. He used to say that what he knew, he had gained more by prayer than by human industry and study. And of St. Bonaventure it is related that, while he was lecturing in the chair of theology at Paris with great competence and satisfaction, and composing at the same time some books with the applause of all the world, one day he received a visit from St. Thomas Aquinas, who was his intimate friend and contemporary. St. Thomas asked him to show him the books that he studied. St. Bonaventure took him to his cell, where he showed him some few books in which he studied, that he kept on his table. St. Thomas desired to see those special books whence he drew such wonderful ideas, and begged him to show him them. Then the saint pointed out to him a praying place, where he kept a very devout crucifix, and said to him: "These, father, are my books, and pardon me, and know for sure that that is the chief book from whence I draw all that I read and write; and I get incomparably more profit and greater light of true science at the foot of this crucifix, having recourse to it in my doubts to be instructed, and by hearing and serving Mass, than by all other books and literary exercises." This answer left St. Thomas in greater admiration and devotion to the saint.

CHAPTER VI

*That We Must Beware of the Other Extreme, Which
Would Be Withdrawing from All Intercourse with
Our Neighbor under Pretense of Attending
to Ourselves*

SOMEONE may say: "If there is so much danger in dealing with neighbors, I have no mind to run such risks, but I will retire as far as I can, and busy myself solely with my own advancement and salvation, seeing that I am more bound to look to myself than to others, and it is not right to put myself in danger of perdition to save other people." This is the other extreme into which it is possible to fall, withdrawing from the royal road of our institute. To this also we have an answer in the holy Gospel, in the parable of the talents. The holy evangelists (Matt. xxv. 14; Luke xix. 15) relate how a lord divided his goods among his servants: to one he gave ten talents; to another, two; and to another, one. The first and second made good use of their talents, and gained with them as much again, and for this they were highly praised and rewarded. But he who had received one talent buried it and hid it away under ground; and when the master came to ask an account, he answered: "I knew that thou wert an austere man, driving bargains to the utmost, and seeking to reap and gather even what thou hast not scattered and sown; and so I have hidden the talent that thou gavest me down in the earth; here it is entire as thou gavest it me." The lord says to him: "*Wicked and slothful servant, out of thine own mouth I condemn thee* (Luke xix. 22). Knowing that it is my way to gather and reap where I have not scattered or sown, why didst thou not trade with my money, to return me the capital sum with interest? Take away from him the talent and give it to him that hath ten talents, who with the five that I gave him hath gained other five, for thus shall

he be rewarded and promoted. And as for this useless and unprofitable servant, cast him into the outer darkness, where shall be naught but weeping and gnashing of teeth." St. Augustine explains this parable to our purpose. He says that Christ our Redeemer proposed it to warn and instruct those who for feebleness and sloth have no mind to take up the office of dispensers in the Church of God, saying that they do not want to give an account to God of other people's sins. Let them take warning, he says, from this example; for we read of no other cause of the condemnation of this servant than his not having traded or made anything out of the talent he had received; for he had not lost it, nor invested it badly; but had kept it well, hiding it under the earth that it might not be stolen.

St. Ambrose says: "Let us look to it that God call us not to account for an idle silence"—*Videamus ne reddamus rationem pro otioso silentio*. For there is a profitable silence, as was that of Susanna, who did more by her silence than she could have done by speaking; she was silent with men, and spoke to God (Dan. xiii. 35). There is another silence that is idle, and that is bad—*Est enim et negotiosum silentium, et est silentium otiosum*. As we have to give an account to God for idle words, so also for this idle silence, which consists in this, that, when we might and ought to aid and advance our neighbor by our words, we fail to do so. Of us particularly God must ask an account of this, since He has entrusted this talent to us and given us this office and ministry of assisting others; and thus He will ask of us an account not only of our own spiritual progress, as He will of those who have no other object in life, but also of how we have busied ourselves in helping and winning over our neighbor; and if He finds that we have hidden the talent and buried it under the earth, He will drive us away from His presence and chastise us, as was done to that wicked and idle servant. Thus we must have a care of both services, and not quit the one for

the other. We must take example herein from Christ our Redeemer, of Whom it is said in the Gospel that on the night of His Passion He rose from prayer and went to visit His disciples, and from them He went straight back to prayer. So we should go out from prayer to labor for the help of our neighbor, and straightway return to the retirement of prayer.

St. Bernard treats this matter well on those words of the Bridegroom to the bride: *Arise, make haste, my beloved one, my fair one, and come* (Cant. ii. 10). To what? He says, doubtless to the saving of souls. But how is this? Is it not the same Bridegroom, Who a little before in the same chapter so earnestly forbade our waking His bride? *I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the mountain goats and the hinds of the fields, not to awake or rouse my beloved from sleep until she herself wishes it* (Cant. ii. 7). How does He thereupon command, not only that she should rise, but that she should rise in haste? Does He in one moment, and as it were simultaneously, forbid them to awaken His bride, and then bid her rise and do so in haste? What means this so sudden change of will and purpose on the part of the Bridegroom? Think you, says St. Bernard, that it was fickleness on the part of the Bridegroom, and that what He wished one moment He wished otherwise in that next? Not so, but He would commend to us these necessary alterations that we have to make, from the sleep and repose of prayer and contemplation to the labor of action necessary for the help of our neighbor. For the love of God cannot stand idle; it is a fire, and claims forthwith to kindle and inflame all around it with that same love. And for this reason the bride must not only quit the repose of contemplation and rise from prayer, but she is to rise in haste, to let us see the great and vehement desire she should have to help her neighbor. And therefore, says St. Bernard, scarcely has she tasted a little repose on the bosom of her Beloved, when He at once awakens her, and

bids her go about other things more profitable. And I say "more profitable," because in the eyes of God helping others along with ourselves is more profitable and more highly to be prized than devoting ourselves solely to our own advancement and recollection.

Nor is this the first time that this has happened to the bride in her dealings with her Beloved; the same has happened at other times before. She would wish to be ever rejoicing in the delight and repose of contemplation and the embraces and sweet kisses of her Beloved; and so she entreats, saying: *Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth* (Cant. i. 1); and He answers that her breasts are better than wine, giving her to understand that she ought to have children, and bestow her care and attention on them. Remember that you are a father and have children, and that you have to give them milk and rear them, and that you must often leave your repose and quiet to give them sustenance and remedy. We have a figure of this in Jacob, of whom Holy Writ says (Gen. xxix. 23) that, when he thought to enjoy the embraces and kisses of Rachel, who was barren, they gave him Lia, who was blear-eyed but fruitful. So now, when the bride desires the kiss and sweet embraces of her Bridegroom, they commend to her the duty of a mother and of rearing children. *Thy breasts are better than wine* (Cant. i. 1). For better than the sweetness of the wine of contemplation, and more pleasing to God at the time, is the fruit of preaching and converse with our neighbor and gaining souls to God. Though Lia is not so fair as Rachel, she is more fruitful, and her fertility supplies and quite makes up for the lack of the beauty of Rachel.

Though the contemplative life is more perfect than the active, yet when to the contemplative life there is joined this active life of teaching and helping our neighbor and gaining souls to God, that is more perfect than the contemplative life alone. So St. Chrysostom explains the saying

of St. Paul to the Romans: *I could wish to be anathema myself from Christ on behalf of my brethren, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh* (Rom. ix. 3). So great was the zeal that he had for the salvation of souls, that he desired to be removed for some periods from the most sweet conversations and company of Christ, and cease to indulge in his acts of love, to apply himself to the profit of his neighbor; and that was in a way making himself anathema from Christ for their sake. And all the doctors acknowledge this to have been a supreme act of charity.

Thus what seems a loss is not a loss, but a great gain. We must persuade ourselves that we shall lose nothing of our own spiritual profit by attending to the profit of our neighbor; rather we shall gain and profit more, and grow in virtue and perfection. By way of illustration and confirmation of this, Clement of Alexandria brings up sundry good comparisons. Wells, says he, bring up better and purer water the more you draw from them; and, contrariwise, when you draw nothing from them, the water gets stagnant and bad. A knife is kept bright by use for cutting; and left unused, it thereupon goes moldy and rusty. Fire loses nothing by burning and setting alight other things, but rather gains and spreads the more. In human sciences we see that he who teaches others learns much by teaching, and in that way men grow very learned. So also it is with this spiritual and divine wisdom; especially since the word of God is a *sharp, two-edged sword* (Heb. iv. 12) by which he who cuts others cuts also himself. The lesson I give to others is necessary also for me; my conscience thereupon stings me with the thought: "How is it that you don't do yourself what you tell others to do? Woe to them who preach and do not practise!" Seeing in confession the falls of other people is a warning to me to walk in fear and caution, begging God to hold me in His hand and give me grace not to let me fall in that way. Helping this and that person to die makes us keep the hour of

death present before us, and try to be ever prepared for it. Visiting prisons and hospitals, making up quarrels and effecting reconciliations, gives us a better knowledge of the miseries of this world and a higher esteem of the favor that the Lord has done us in calling us to religion. In a word, all our ministrations not only are not occasions to make us worse, but rather rouse us from slumber, and invite and incite us more to virtue and perfection.

Add to this the great mercies that the Lord shows to such as work for their neighbors. If to them who do corporal works of mercy He has promised so much, as we read in Holy Writ (Matt. xxv. 35-40), what shall it be for those who do spiritual works of mercy, which are as much greater as the soul is more than the body! St. Chrysostom says that to those that saying of the Gospel right well applies: *Give and it shall be given unto you* (Luke vi. 38). And that is what the Wise Man says: *The soul that gives blessing shall grow fat; and he that inebriateth shall be inebriated* (Prov. xi. 25). The soul that doth good to her neighbor shall thrive; and he that replenishes others and inebriates them spiritually with desire and love of the things of heaven, shall in his turn be replenished and inebriated by God with His divine consolations. Some liken them to the almoners of princes, to whom they give much to distribute; and if they give away much, they give them much. But this comparison does not go on all fours; for if the almoner be faithful, he has nothing left on his hands, and himself grows no richer for giving to others; but they who help their neighbor by spiritual ministrations are themselves enriched by giving to others and enriching them. So that is a better comparison of others, who say that they are like the nurses that suckle the children of kings, whom the king maintains and supports by meats from his royal table; and they with what they have over support and suckle the infants. In this way they are nourished whose occupation it is to suckle the children of the King of Heaven. He

sends them food from His divine and royal table, so ample and abundant that, when they are themselves quite sated and enriched, they may be able out of their abundance to share it with their spiritual children. All which St. Peter Chrysologus admirably expresses in these words: "In the way that kings feed the nurses of their children with delicate food that they may suckle them with the purest of milk, so the sovereign King of Heaven is wont to do with the ministers of His word. Notwithstanding that they may not deserve it, yet in view of the sustenance that they have to give to His Majesty's children, He feeds and nourishes them with the viands of His heavenly table, to make their milk richer and the nourishment they impart more delicious."

We in the Society particularly must always go on this presupposition, since in the Society God has made our waiting upon and helping our neighbor a means to our own spiritual advancement, that being our institute and vocation. So it is said expressly in the bull of Julius III, where, after the sovereign pontiff has laid down the end of our institute and ministries, he goes on to say: "Let him take care to have before his eyes all the days of his life God in the first place, and after that his vocation and institute, which is a way to God." Thus, as the spiritual progress of sundry religious orders of monks depends on careful assistance at their choir duties, a regular observance of enclosure, and fasts and austerities proper to their vocation, so our progress and perfection depend on doing well our ministrations to our neighbor, for it is to that we are called, as they are to that other end. Thus we may say to our neighbor what St. Paul says: *You are our joy, our glory, and crown* (Phil. iv. 1; I Thess. ii. 20). St. Ambrose says on that passage: "It is clear that the improvement and perfection of his disciples is the joy and perfection of the master." So we must understand that this is our merit, our spiritual improvement and perfection.

Thus, though recollection and a great affection for prayer is an excellent thing in the Society, yet any prayer and recollection that withdraws us from our ministries to our neighbor is a temptation in the Society. If you were out there in the world, or in another religious order whose business was other than this, it might be a movement of the good spirit and perfection to withdraw to make more meditation and attend to yourself alone. But here in the Society it is not a movement of the good spirit, but a temptation and delusion of the devil, who transfigures himself into an angel of light and, under color of your spiritual progress and taking no risks, is seeking to remove you from your institute. The prayer of the Society should be in conformity with our vocation, that we may be better heartened to help our neighbor, that we may say with holy Job: *When I go to sleep, I will say: When shall I rise? and once more I will wait for the evening* (Job vii. 4). Our occupation, then, at meditation should be to dispose and prepare ourselves better to fulfil our ministries; and our prayer will be all the better, the better prepared for that we come out of it. The more you grow in the love of God, the more inflamed should you become with desire to gain souls to God, and seeking and trying to get others to love and serve Him along with yourself.

It is related of a religious of the Order of St. Francis, a great servant of God, that, having labored many years in the conversion of the Indians, he desired to recollect himself a little, to prepare for death with more diligence and care. So he returned to Spain, and withdrew from all dealing with his neighbor. It is said that every time he put himself in prayer he seemed to see a vision of Christ crucified, Who with loving complaint and rebuke said to him: "Why hast thou left me on this cross, and gone to seek thine own quiet and repose?" Admonished and much moved by this vision, he returned to the harvest which he had left, where he worked for many more years.

CHAPTER VII

*Sundry Remedies against the Pusillanimity of Those
Who Withdraw from Helping Their Neighbor for
Fear of Losing Their Own Souls*

THOROUGHLY to root out of our heart the temptation of pusillanimity with which the devil is wont to assail some timorous and scrupulous persons, who think they are putting themselves in danger of the loss of their own souls by trying to save others, we must in the first place understand and persuade ourselves of an important truth that will be a great help to this purpose. It is that we shall be safer and better protected where God places us than in any other position that we were thinking we should be in. Going by obedience about the streets and squares, hearing filthy and impure things from penitents in confession, we shall be better shielded and safeguarded than in our own cell, there by ourselves, retired of our own will, stealing away from those ministries for fear of a fall. In that seclusion possibly you may find yourself burning in a flame of evil thoughts, whereas there in the ministry you would have been very secure and quiet, because God had put you there and would guard and defend you. *Lord, thou hast encompassed and guarded us with the buckler of thy good will* (Psalm v. 13), the good will of God, commanding and placing us there.

St. Basil takes good note of this. Think not, he says, that all you have to do to be chaste and free from fleshly temptations is to live in retirement and see nobody. Not so. St. Jerome in the solitude of the desert, dining on herbs, his limbs crushed with severe penance, tells us that many a time he fancied himself taking part in the dances and balls of Roman ladies. Though his face was wan and sallow with much fasting, his body cold, and his flesh dry and almost dead, still his will did not cease to take fire with

evil thoughts and to feel great motions of impure desire. On the contrary, Palladius relates of the Abbot Elias that God had given him such a great gift of chastity that he presided over a convent of three hundred nuns for forty years in as much peace and quiet as if they had been men, without feeling any temptation or motion or danger in point of chastity.

Those three children were thrown with their clothes and shoes in the midst of the Babylonian furnace, and the fire did them no harm, not even to a hair of their garments; whereas the servants of the king, who kept at a distance and were on their guard against the fire, were burned to ashes by it. God was powerful enough to prevent their burning in the midst of the flames, who entered them for His love; nay, the flaming mass was changed into a garden of flowers and a paradise of delights, where they stood praising and blessing God. So it befalls those who for love of that same God and zeal for His honor and glory, walk in the midst of the fire of the Babylonian furnace of the world. Where others take fire and are consumed, they are praising and blessing God, giving Him hearty thanks for the favor He has done them in calling them to religion; and where they see others drawing down perdition and damnation upon their souls, they gather greater knowledge and abhorrence of the vanities of this world and greater esteem of what they have in religion. *To them that love God, all things work together unto good* (Rom. viii. 28). To them who for love of God and obedience busy themselves in these ministries, everything turns to good. They gather honey from hard rock, and the sweetest oil from rugged crags. Where there are faithful hearts anxious to please God, where a man is never intruded or put into such offices as ours without being lawfully called, there is no cause for alarm, but rather of great confidence in the Lord, that since He puts us in such offices, He will draw us well out of them.

That we may be thoroughly penetrated with this truth,

and more confident and encouraged in our ministries, leaving aside many other motives, I will speak now particularly of one that we have for this in the Society, that is, the particular grace of religious vocation. This is quite a main point and a source of great consolation, as well for our present purpose as for many others. Every religious order has a particular grace and help from the Lord to gain the state of perfection to which its members are called; for God never calls anyone to any state or end, but He gives him also suitable means and strength and grace, as needful to gain the perfection to which he is called. St. Thomas founds this doctrine well on Holy Scripture and natural reason, for *the works of God are perfect* (Deut. xxxii. 4). So, if God institutes a religious order for an end, He also must give it the natural means and aids to gain that end, otherwise the work of God would be imperfect. So we see His Majesty acts in the order of nature. When He gives a power to any purpose, He also gives the means suitable for that power to come to act; otherwise, philosophers say, it would be an idle and vain power. The same holds good in supernatural things and the order of grace; such an order must be not less perfect, but rather more perfect, than the order of nature. So, when God institutes a religious order for any end, He gives it all the means and aids necessary for that order to be able to gain its end; and this we call "the grace of religious vocation."

Now, as religious orders are different, each having its own mode of procedure and particular end and holy purpose for which it was instituted, so also God gives them a particular grace and blessing to gain that end for which He instituted and designed them. To the Carthusian monks God gives a particular grace to observe enclosure and abstinence; to the Hieronymites, to keep their choir well; and so we may run through the other religious orders. Now the Society is a special religious order, instituted by apostolic authority in the Church of God, having for its spe-

cial end the helping of souls; and to gain that end the Lord has given us peculiar and special means, which the sovereign pontiff sets down in the bull of institution, which are to preach, to hear confessions, to lecture, to teach Christian doctrine, to give the Spiritual Exercises, to effect reconciliations, to visit prisons and hospitals. Thus, as the Society is an order called by God to this end of helping souls, so also is it called to the exercise of these ministries as the means to gain that end.

This is to be carefully taken notice of as a very consoling fact, that not only the end, but also these means and ministries which we use with our neighbor are proper to our institute and belong to us by the rule approved and confirmed by the vicar of Christ, as appears by the bull of our institution issued by Julius III. Thus, then, it is by this rule that men of the Society are preachers, confessors, and lecturers. And not only spiritual ministrations, but also the corporal works of mercy which the Society does for the benefit of its neighbor, as visiting prisons and hospitals, are done by virtue of our rule and institute, as the same bull shows.

Coming now to the point, it follows that the Society has a special aid and grace from God our Lord to gain this end of saving souls for which it was instituted and for taking the means proper to our vocation and institute, given us by God for that end, and this is the grace of vocation proper to this religious order of the Society of Jesus. Thus our Lord will co-operate with us in a special manner and put special force and efficacy into the means we take to gain this end, for such is the special grace of this order; and so we find it by experience every day by the bounty and mercy of the Lord. What, think you, is the reason why a preacher of the Society goes on a mission—sometimes a young man who has just finished his studies—and sets a whole town in commotion? Everybody comes to confession; it looks like Holy Week; reconciliations are effected

that many others had tried in vain to effect; public scandals are put an end to, that neither civil nor ecclesiastical authorities had been able to check. Think you that this is done by your virtues and learning or by your talent and gift of preaching? Not a bit of it; this is the special grace of the order to which you belong, that being its institute, and these the means proportionate thereto; wherefore God co-operates with them in a particular manner and gives them particular force and efficacy to attain their end. On the other hand—and this is a good confirmation of what I say—we see cases of persons who have left the Society, men who in it seemed to have wings and soar on high, and were listened to and produced fruit; they thought that out of the Society they should also be able to fly aloft and do the like; but the wings being the grace of their religious vocation, when they went out of the Society, they left them here behind them and found themselves birds without feathers.

In the First Book of Maccabees we have an example much to this point. Holy Scripture tells us that the Maccabees had done wonders in their battles, fighting most valiantly and gaining great victories without suffering any defeats themselves, and so they had a great name and reputation all the world over. When some of the people of Israel saw this, there grew in them, along with rivalry, ambition; and they desired and said: "Let us, too, make a name for ourselves as these have done." They put their saying into execution; they gathered an army, and went out to fight the enemy. But the affair succeeded not according to their expectation; they returned covering their faces for shame. The enemy went out to meet them, routed them, and put them to flight, and there died two thousand of them. Holy Writ thereupon notes the reason thereof. They fell and were routed, and where they thought to win were beaten, *because they were not of the lineage of the men whom God had chosen to deliver the people of Israel* (I Mac. v. 62). Thus

we have nothing to pride ourselves on, no ground to attribute anything to ourselves; to God and to our religious vocation we owe all that we are. *The Lord hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament*, not by the learning and talents that we possess, but *by the spirit that he imparts to us* (II Cor. iii. 6). Because such is our institute and you are a member of this religious order, God co-operates with you and gives you a particular grace and aid to produce much fruit in your neighbor, and so by your helping them on, not only do you lose no ground yourself, but rather you too get on thereby and grow in virtue and perfection. This is the special grace of this our religious vocation, and a particular effect thereof. This consideration is a great help to keep us from being disheartened.

St. Bernard well observes that, when the Bridegroom bids the bride to rise from the sleep of contemplation, He does not say *go*, but *come* (Cant. ii. 10); a word of no small encouragement to us, whereby we are given to understand that He does not leave you by your going, but carries you and draws you to Himself thereby. He does not send us on these ministries to remove us from Himself, but to unite us more closely to Himself; and He carries us and goes along with us. Thus we need not fear losing thereby, but should rather gather great courage and great confidence and strength, believing that thus we shall gain and thrive more.

We are told in Holy Scripture of a king's son who, to encourage his servants to do a certain deed, said to them: *It is I who command you, be strong and fear not* (II Kings xiii. 28). Since it is Thou, O Lord, Who commandest me to occupy myself in these ministries and deal with my neighbor, what can I have to fear? I shall be safer and better protected in the midst of bad women, hearing their confessions and preaching to them, if Thou hast put me there, than I should be, shut in between four walls of my own will; since it is Thou, O Lord, Who commandest it,

Thou Who settest me at it. *Though I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because thou art with me* (Psalm xxii. 4).

Hence also it will be seen how great is the delusion of those persons in religion who, following their own judgment and opinion, say: "If I were in such a place, or in such an office or ministry, I think I should find consolation and serve God there better; in this house or ministry where I am, I am quite out of sorts and seem not to get on at all." Oh, what a delusion and huge deceit! How can you think that things will go better with you there where you wish to station yourself, and not go well where God stations you? We have known persons who, not settling down in the ministries and posts where God and obedience placed them, looked out for other posts and managed to bring their superior's will over to their own, thinking so to serve God better and with more fruit; but they did so badly in the change of situation which they desired and contrived, that they came to see that this had been a punishment of God. Truly we should tremble at the thought of desiring anything of our own will, any office or place or post whatsoever, but let ourselves be carried and governed simply by God by means of obedience; for where God put us, there we shall be better and safer and more secure.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the First Means of Doing Good to Our Neighbor, Which Is a Good and Holy Life

WE will now mention some general means of doing good to our neighbor, means which our Father sets down in the Seventh Part of the Constitutions, leaving out other particular means, proper to priests, of which he speaks in the Fourth Part. And though what we shall say will be in view of the spiritual profit of our neighbor, nevertheless

they will be things appertaining also to our own spiritual advancement. For, as we said at the beginning, these two things are so united in the Society that what is a means for helping our neighbor is also a means for our own advancement; and what is a means for our own advancement is also a means for the better helping of our neighbor. Thus what we shall say will be an instruction that may be of great service to all men generally. The first means that our Father lays down there to profit our neighbor is a good and exemplary life. He writes: "The first thing that will help will be a good example of all propriety and Christian virtue, that by good works even more than by good words they may edify those with whom they deal." A good and holy life, being oneself under control and discipline to begin with, is the principal and most efficacious means of doing much good to our neighbor. As the better a tree is growing itself, the more fruitful it is for its owners, so the further a preacher or confessor is advanced himself in perfection, the more useful he will be to others.

The importance and necessity of this means is shown by this consideration in the first place, that it is certain that the example of a good life goes further to persuade men than any amount of words and sermons. So Christ our Redeemer began to teach the way of salvation by deeds first, and then by words. *Jesus began to do and to teach*, says the Evangelist St. Luke (Acts i. 1). He began by working for thirty years, to teach afterwards for only three. And the glorious Baptist, says St. Jerome, on this account chose the desert, there to preach Christ. *I am the voice of one crying in the desert* (John i. 23). The holy doctor asks how the Baptist comes to choose the desert to preach in, since that seems rather a place not to be seen or heard by anybody than to preach. He answers: The preacher and herald of Christ chose the desert that men, seeing the new life in the preacher, might begin to admire

and be moved to penance, to give up their vices and seek to imitate the preacher. He knew well that example was a more effectual means to move hearers and produce fruit in them than exclamations and words. So it is said in the Gospel: *He was a burning and shining light* (John v. 35). Burning with love of God, he shone forth with great splendor on his neighbors by the example of his so wonderful life.

It is a trite saying of Seneca: "The way by lessons and precepts is a long way, but that by example is short and effectual, because men believe more what they see than what they hear"—*Longum est iter per praecepta, breve et efficax per exempla*. St. Bernard gives another reason for this. Example is so effectual to move others because they are thereby persuaded that what is told them is feasible, seeing him who tells it them practise it and put it in execution, and that is a great encouragement to them to put it in practice. St. Augustine says that so great is the infirmity and weakness of man, that it is difficult for him to do good unless he first sees the example of it in others; and on that account he says that it is very important for a teacher and preacher of the Gospel to be a good man, to give a pattern for those who hear him to imitate. So St. Paul bade people imitate him as he imitated Christ. *Brethren, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ* (I Cor. iv. 16).

Add to this that, when it is seen that a preacher and teacher conforms his life to his doctrine, that makes people believe that what he says comes from his heart, and so it has force and efficacy to move and persuade; but when it is not so, all his preaching goes for little or nothing. St. Basil says, and St. Chrysostom, that such a one is no true preacher or teacher, but a pretender and impostor. He is like, they say, to an actor in a comedy; he plays the part of a king, or a knight, or a rich man, and he is no king, nor knight, nor rich man; so is he who preaches only in words. You give a good presentation of humility, but

you are not humble; a good presentation of contempt of the world and worldly honor, but you have not despised the world entirely nor its honors; you are a player in a farce and a comedian, not a Gospel preacher. St. Basil well likens these people to painters who paint very well the beauty of a man on a piece of linen or canvas, while they are themselves very ugly; so, he says, are preachers who, proud people themselves, know very well how to depict humility and say elegant things about it. Impatient people know how to give a good picture of patience; chatters and woolgatherers are able to say beautiful things about silence and recollection. St. Augustine compares them to milestones, that show the traveler the way he is going, while themselves remain where they are. Such also he says were the scribes and Pharisees, who directed the Magi to Bethlehem, not going there themselves.

St. Jerome on those words of the Wise Man: *The sluggard buries his hand in his bosom, and thinks it too much trouble to raise it to his mouth* (Prov. xxvi. 15), says that hiding of one's hands below one's arms, and not caring for laziness to raise hand to mouth, is the way of a preacher who does not do what he says, nor fit his deeds to his words. St. Gregory Nazianzen says that he who preaches and does not act accordingly, draws souls with one hand and drives them away with the other; does with one hand and undoes with the other. These are the scribes and Pharisees whom Christ rebukes in the Gospel. Woe to them who say and do not! They neither move nor do any good with their words. *But he that doth what he preacheth, he shall be great in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 19). These are the evangelical and apostolic preachers, and they who produce much fruit in souls by the good example of their lives. As holiness is a thing supernatural and divine, all men pay holy people a measure of veneration and respect more than human. They see and hear them, not as men, but as angels; they take what they say as coming from

heaven, and so it moves and makes an impression on their heart. Therefore St. Paul requires of God's workers that they be *beyond reproach* (I Tim. iii. 2), *not to be put to shame* (II Tim. ii. 15), *an example to the faithful in charity, chastity*, and the other virtues (I Tim. iv. 12), that so their teaching may have force and efficacy to excite others and draw them over to themselves. This, then, is the chief means to aid our neighbor, a good and holy life: first, for example's sake; secondly, because, for God to take us for instruments to work much good in our neighbor, it is very important that we be well advanced in virtue and mortification.

In the Tenth Part of our Constitutions our Father treats of the preservation and increase of the Society and the means to aid us to the spiritual end for which it was instituted, which is the salvation of souls; and he says that the means which unite the instrument with God and dispose it better to be guided by His divine hand, which are goodness and virtue, are more efficacious than other means which merely enable it to get on with men, such as learning and other natural and human gifts; so we must lean principally upon the former. He writes: "Let all give themselves to solid and perfect virtues and spiritual things, and reckon them of more account than learning and other natural and human gifts; for these interior qualities it is that must give effect to the exterior in view of the end proposed to us." And the reason of this is clear. For if the business had a human end and belonged to the natural order, human means and human prudence were necessary to make sure of it; but the end we aim at is supernatural and divine—to move hearts, to convert souls, and draw them out of sin. It is not in our competence to engender sanctity in souls; that belongs to Him Who said at the beginning of the world: *Let there be light, and there was light* (Gen. i. 3). Our learning, our prudence, our diligence and industry, and all the natural and human means that we can employ are out of

all proportion with this end. God it is Who enlightens hearts and speaks words of life; all the efficacy of the instrument to produce fruit in souls springs from God. Thus those means which better conjoin and unite us with God will make us better and more effectual instruments for the conversion of souls. The more conjoined and united we are with God, the better shall we be able to receive in ourselves the influences of His graces and heavenly gifts, and communicate them to others.

St. Denis the Areopagite, speaking of the holiness and perfection that priests and ministers of the Gospel should have, through whom God is pleased to impart His gifts and His blood, says that they must first be holy in themselves to make others holy; they must be perfect to make others perfect; they must have so much light and knowledge of God as to be able to enlighten and illuminate others—*sacri et sacrautes, perfecti et perficientes, illuminati et illuminantes*. They must be so kindled and inflamed with the fire of love of God as to make others catch fire, and kindle and inflame them with the same love; for, as St. Gregory says: "He who is not on fire himself, will never set fire to others"—*Qui non ardet, non incendit*. That holy friar, Thomas of Villanova, Archbishop of Valentia, used often to repeat these words: "How can burning words issue from a cold breast?" Then will your words set your neighbor on fire with the love of God, when they come forth from a heart burning and inflamed with the love of God. Then will you set the world on fire with the fire that the Son of God came to cast on the earth: *I came to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but that it be enkindled?* (Luke xii. 49). Then will one word go for more than a hundred.

Plato said a thing in which he said more than he knew; that, as the loadstone has this virtue, that by touching iron it impregnates it with the attractive virtue which itself has, so that the iron which has touched the loadstone also attracts other iron to itself in the same way that the load-

stone itself does, so men touched by God have the virtue of attracting others to God. St. Augustine, as he tells us ("De Civitate Dei," xxiv. 4), was greatly struck with this property of the loadstone when he put it to the test. He saw how an iron ring, on touching a loadstone, drew and fastened to itself another ring, and that another, and that other another, till they made a chain of them in the air wonderfully interwoven. Now, if our words are not as the words of men touched by God, how shall they draw others to God? If you are not on fire with the love of God, how are you to inflame others? Even in the secular schools rhetoricians say that, to stir others, you yourself must be stirred to your innermost heart; no way is more effectual than that. How can I move another to tears when my own eyes are dry? How can I move him to grief if he sees that I show no grief nor emotion myself? How move him to indignation if he sees that I am not at all indignant? In the same way, then, how shall you move others to contempt of the world when you have not succeeded in really contemning it yourself? How can you give them a liking for mortification when you yourself have no taste for it, or make others humble when you are not humble? It is only fire that burns, only water that wets, nor can anything give to another thing the color which it has not itself. How can you fasten and impress upon others what you have not yourself? You will be like the discharges of firearms and artillery without ball, that fill the air with thunder-sound and rumbling, but do not knock down walls nor kill the enemy. Such are preachers who have nothing in them but words; it all goes in thunder and noise, *as one beating the air* (I Cor. ix. 26), as St. Paul says. Their cries beat the air, but they upset nobody, nor strike home to hearts, because there is no ball, no substance, in them. They have none of that virtue and spirit which give force and efficacy to all the rest.

A talent for preaching does not consist in phrases and

tricks of rhetoric, nor in saying things highly sublime and subtle. Not such was the preaching of the Preacher of the Gentiles, that vessel chosen of God to carry His name all over the world, as he says to the men of Corinth: *When I, brethren, came to your city, I did not come preaching Christ with elegance of words or profound learning; for I reckoned myself not to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and him crucified* (I Cor. ii. 1-2). And further on he says: *My words and my preaching did not rest on persuasions of human wisdom, but on the manifestation of the spirit and of truth, that your faith may not be founded on human wisdom, but on the power of God* (I Cor. ii. 4-5). In the "Ecclesiastical History in Three Parts" it is related, to the great praise and credit of the ancient Fathers, that they taught by holy instructions and wise counsels, away from all affectations and flowers of rhetoric, and, as prudent physicians, applied remedies suitable to the infirmities of the conscience of their hearers. Such should be our sermons and spiritual discourses. We do not go there to preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ, as the Apostle St. Paul says (II Cor. iv. 5). You may take it for a certainty that preachers who make a parade of great learning and eloquence and perfect mastery of their mother tongue, will do very little good; first, for the reason we have already mentioned, that the judicious portion of the audience understand very well that he who preaches in this style is a man who enjoys the sound of his own voice, is fond of talking and cutting figures, and is more anxious to pose as a good speaker than desirous of profiting them; secondly, because this very elegance makes the fruit fall off, and the greater the elegance, the less the effect. That saying of rhetoricians is true, which Quintilian quotes: "The gist and meaning of a speech falls to the ground, where the phrases are too much praised"—*Iacet sensus in oratione in qua verba laudantur*. That is to say, men drop their attention to things, when words are elegant to excess; the words steal

away the hearers' attention from the meaning, and they look away from *what* is said to them for looking at *how* it is said to them. Now, if even teachers of rhetoric censure this and hold it for a great fault in an orator, how much more is it to be censured in a preacher of the Gospel, who has to attend only to the advancement and salvation of souls! *To each one is given the manifestation of the spirit for a useful purpose* (I Cor. xii. 7)—the good of souls; and on this the preacher should ever keep his eyes.

St. Jerome says: "The mark of a good sermon is not the applause of the hearers, nor their going out saying, '*Never did man speak thus* (John vii. 46) ; didn't you see what fine things he brought in and how well he said them?' but the compunction and tears of the hearers and their change of life; let that be your praise." *Lacrimae auditorum laudes tue sint*. In this consists the talent for preaching—in God's taking a man for His instrument to move the hearts of the hearers, so that through hearing his words their illusions fall away, and they come to take account of the evil life they have led, and repent and return with all their heart to God. Father Master Avila used to say: "Preaching does not consist in your being an hour up there reasoning about God, but in your hearer's coming turned into a devil, and going away turned into an angel." In that lies the talent of a preacher. Another great servant of God used to say that, when the hearers go away from a sermon with their heads down, without speaking or looking at one another, then the sermon has been good and profitable, for that is a sign that each one is carrying away a message for himself.

In the Life of our Father Francis Borgia it is told that, when he preached in Biscay, the greater part of the people could not catch what he said, for their being very numerous and unable to get near the pulpit, as also because they did not understand the speech of Castille; but it was marvelous to see the attention which they all paid and the

tears they shed. When they were asked why they cried over the sermon, seeing they could not understand it, they answered that they cried at the sight of the holy duke, and also because they felt within their souls such utterances and inspirations of God as signified and gave them to understand what the preacher was preaching to them from the pulpit. At another time, in Portugal, the cardinal infant, who was afterwards king of Portugal, wanted Father Francis to preach, and he said he was tired, having come in from a journey. "I do not ask him to preach," said the cardinal, "but only to mount the pulpit, and let them see the man who has left all he had for God." That is what preaches, that is what makes fruit in souls more than words—example and holiness of life. That is what we should secure, and on that principally insist, that God may take us for instruments for the conversion of souls—confessors as well as preachers, and all the rest of us who have to deal with our neighbor.

CHAPTER IX

Of Another Means of Helping Our Neighbor, Which Is Prayer

THE second means that our Father gives to help our neighbor is prayer. "Our neighbor is likewise helped," he says, "by our desires before God and our prayers." As this business of gaining and converting souls is supernatural, more is attained and done in it by prayers, tears, and sighs than by words and exclamations. Moses' prayer did more and bore a greater part in the victory against Amalek than all the lances and swords engaged in the fray. So long as Moses held his arms outstretched, the people of Israel were winning the fight; but when he lowered them, they were getting the worst of it. So it was necessary for two attendants to hold up his arms, one on one

side and the other on the other, that they might be always held up; and so they gained the victory (Exod. xvii. 12). This was the way in which the people of God conquered their enemies. That is what the Madianites said in alarm, when they saw the great victories of the children of Israel: *This people is destined to destroy us, as the ox with its mouth bites the grass down to the roots* (Num. xxii. 4)—with its mouth; that is, with its prayers. So St. Augustine and Origen explain this passage. Now, if victory in war, to which our strength and human power may be reckoned to bear some proportion, is given by God through prayers, what must be the victory over spiritual enemies and the conversion of souls, where our means, our strength and efforts, fall so far short as to bear no proportion to so high an end! It is by prayers and sighs that we must arrange this matter with God. It is they that must appease God and win pardon and conversion.

St. Augustine very well illustrates and weighs the value and efficacy of this means, on those words of God to Moses: *Leave me, that my wrath may be enraged against them, and I may exterminate them from off the face of the earth* (Exod. xxxii. 10). When the children of Israel had adored the calf and God wished to destroy them, Moses set himself to ask God on their behalf, saying: "*Why, Lord, seekest thou to chastise thy people, whom thou hast led out of Egypt with strong and mighty arm?*" See what the Egyptians will say, that for this Thou didst lead them out into those mountains and deserts, to gather them together, as they say, in the open, and destroy them there entirely. Remember, Lord, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Thy servants, to whom Thou didst promise and swear to multiply their seed as the stars of heaven and give them the Land of Promise." God answered: "Leave Me alone, for I am minded to destroy them utterly." What is this, O Lord? Why dost Thou say, *Leave Me?* Who holdeth Thee back, or can hold Thee back? Who can tie Thy hands? *Who*

hath withstood his will? (Rom. ix. 19). What hand can be raised against Thee? What dost Thou mean by *Leave Me*? Here you see, says St. Augustine, the force of prayer, and how much it avails with God. That is what He wishes us to understand by that word, *Leave Me*. It is not a word of command; for if it were, it were ill done in the servant not to obey it. Nor is it a word of petition or request, since God has no need to petition His servant; but He wishes to give us to understand that “the prayers of the just are sufficient to resist the anger of God.” St. Jerome says the same on those words in Jeremy (vii. 16): *See that I am minded to chastise this people, therefore ask thou me not on their behalf, nor intercede for them with praises and prayers; make me no resistance.* On which St. Jerome’s remark is as above: *Sanctorum preces Dei irae possunt resistere.* The Prophet David clearly says the same: *And God had a mind to destroy our fathers, had not Moses, His chosen one, in the moment of destruction stood in his sight to remove his anger that he might not destroy them* (Psalm cv. 23). Moses resisted God with prayer, put himself before Him, and turned away His arm when it was about to deliver the blow. *And the Lord was appeased, and did not carry out to the end against his people the chastisement which he had said* (Exod. xxxii. 14). The like thing happened in the sedition and murmuring that the people of Israel set up against Moses and Aaron on the death of Core, Dathan, Abiron, and their followers, saying that they had been the cause thereof. God was angry with His people, and had a mind to destroy them; and the deaths among them amounted to more than fourteen thousand. Aaron thereupon put himself in prayer before God for the people, and offered incense for them, *and the plague ceased* (Num. xvi. 48). On this score the Wise Man (Wisdom xviii. 20) calls prayer a *shield*. These are his words: *But thy anger, O Lord, did not last long, for at once thy servant put himself in prayer before thee, and fought on the people’s behalf* [for

to pray is to fight]. *Aaron then put his hand to the shield of prayer, and therewith resisted the anger of God, and thereupon the work of death ceased.* "What a good shield is prayer," says St. Ambrose, "with which all the blows of the enemy are repelled!"

And, moreover, God is very glad when we withstand His chastisement, and someone is found to intervene to prevent it. An affectionate father, when he threatens his son with punishment, had rather not inflict it, but that someone should intervene to prevent it; and sometimes he has a previous arrangement with friends and acquaintances to hold his hand. So God, Who is more than a father and more than a mother for the great love that He bears us—as being, after all, His children, and children who have cost Him so much, seeing that we have cost Him His lifeblood—would rather not come to blows, and would be very glad if any of His friends would stand in His way. Nay, He goes to seek such, and complains bitterly when there is no one to come to the rescue. He says by the Prophet Ezechiel: *I sought someone who would put himself as a hedge before me, and withstand me, that I might not lay waste the land, and I found none* (xxii. 30); *I had none to go out to meet me, none to oppose himself as a wall and resist me in defense of the house of Israel* (xiii. 5). As a wall keeps the enemy out, and as men go forth to meet the enemy to resist him, so do the prayers of the just resist the sentence of God, His Majesty so condescending to them. The Prophet Isaias also complains bitterly of this: *Alas, O Lord, there is now none, as there used to be, to invoke thy holy name, to arise and encounter thee, and hold thee back* (Isaias lxiv. 7). There is now no Jacob to wrestle with God and hold his own arm to arm against Him, and say: *I will not let thee go until thou bless me* (Gen. xxxii. 26)—the very thing that God desires. Herein is well shown the force and efficacy of the prayers of the just, the friends of God, since they are powerful enough to restrain His arm and

resist His anger. Hence will be better understood and confirmed what we said in the previous chapter, how much it makes for any help that we can render to our neighbor, to be ourselves holy and great friends of God; and how right we were in saying that a good and holy life was the chief means to that end. Anyone who would act as mediator, and effect forgivenesses and reconciliations, must by all means be a *grata persona*, standing high in favor with the person with whom he mediates; otherwise he will rather provoke anger and indignation than get pardon.

A good and holy life is so profitable for the good of our neighbor that, though we made no other prayer nor did any other thing in his service, but only took care to be ourselves very good and very holy, that alone would get them on and avail them very much. That is a marvelous story that is told by Holy Writ in Genesis. God was minded to destroy those cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their great sins. Abraham put himself in prayer before God, and said to Him: "*Wilt thou destroy the just with the impious?*" (Gen. xviii. 23). That doth not seem in accordance with Thy clemency. If there be fifty just men in the city, wilt Thou not pardon the people for love of them?" The Lord said: "Certainly; if there be found fifty just men, I will pardon all for love of them." Abraham spoke once more: "As I have begun, I will go on speaking to my Lord, dust and ashes though I be. Though there be less than that, say, if there be five less, wilt Thou not pardon all for the sake of the five-and-forty just men that there are?" "Yes," said God; "if there are found forty-five just men, I will pardon all for their sakes." Abraham spoke again: "And if there be only forty just men?" "I will pardon all for their sake." "Be not angry, O Lord, if I speak once more. What if there be not found more than thirty just men, wilt Thou not pardon all for love of those thirty?" It is to be observed that, to start with, Abraham went diminishing the number quite little by little, only five at a time, and now,

emboldened by the favor and kindness that he met with, he plucked up courage to diminish it ten at a time; from forty he brings it down to thirty. The Lord said: "If there be thirty just men, for love of them I will pardon all." "As I have begun, O Lord, give me leave to go on speaking. What if there be not found more than twenty just men?" "Very well; for love of them I will pardon them." "I beseech Thee, O Lord, not to be angry: this is my last word; what if there be found ten just men?" "Be it so; I am content with that," said the Lord; "if there be found ten just men among them, I will pardon them all for ten just men." They were not found, and so God destroyed those five cities. Here we see well of what use and profit for others is the good and holy life of the just. What a blessing it would have been to have had at least ten just men among them!

Another time, when God was minded to punish Jerusalem and hand the kingdom of Judah over to the Chaldeans to destroy and sack and put all to the sword, for the great sins that they had committed against His Divine Majesty, He said first by Jeremy: "Go diligently through the streets and squares of Jerusalem, and see and search carefully if you can find one just man, who does right judgment by himself and is faithful and true to his God and to his neighbor; and if you find one, for his sake I will pardon the city and the kingdom, and withdraw the chastisement and ruin that I have threatened" (Jerem. v. 1). St. Jerome had good reason to cry out on this passage and say: "See what value God sets on a just man; for not only for ten just men who should have been found in the city, as He formerly said to Abraham, but for one single just man, to be found in the midst of countless sinners, He was ready to pardon all and grant a reprieve of the punishment they deserved." Great is the love that God bears to the virtue of the just man, since for his sake He suffers and pardons so many sinners.

Good people are greatly to be respected in a community

and commonwealth, and great is the good they do, even though they make it their only business to be good and virtuous. This is one of the reasons that theologians and saints advance to prove that the township owes support to religious, even though they exercise no ministry for the benefit of their neighbors, but live in recollection without going out of their corner and their cell; because from there they do a vast amount of good to the people about, and it is for the sake of these few that God endures so many evil persons in the world. This is confirmed by the parable of the Gospel, telling how, to save the wheat, the master omitted to root out the cockle. *Lest it happen that in gathering the cockle ye root out the wheat at the same time; let the one and the other grow until harvest time* (Matt. xiii. 29-30).

When God was determined to destroy with fire those cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Scripture says that He remembered His well-loved Abraham, and for love of him He delivered Lot, who was his nephew. It is to be observed that we are not told that Abraham asked God for Lot, but that, because Abraham was so much in the good graces of God, He looked after his things and all that concerned him. And God was so careful to look after Lot, Abraham's nephew, that, when he was hurrying him forth to get out of Sodom and save himself in a little town hard by, He said to him: *Make haste, and take refuge there, since I can do nothing till thou puttest thyself in a place of safety* (Gen. xix. 22). O tender mercies of our God! O infinite bounty and compassion! God says He can do nothing until you put yourself in safety. See the account that God makes of one just man, and what He says and does out of regard for him.

Do you, then, take care to be very just and very much of a friend of God, and be sure that God will look after all your affairs, and will remember your parents and your relations and friends, and all that concerns you; and that

all the more, the more you neglect and forget it to take care of yourself and give yourself more to God, although you did not ask for anything in particular; for works ask and cry to God more than words. If the wickedness of the wicked man, as Holy Writ says, cries loud to God, calling for vengeance—*the voice of thy brother's blood cries to me from the earth* (Gen. iv. 10)—much more will virtue and goodness cry in still louder tones to obtain mercy in His sight, Who is such a lover of well-doing, and to Whom it is proper always to pardon and show mercy.

CHAPTER X

Of a Third Means of Doing Good to Our Neighbor, Which Is Zeal for Souls

THE zeal of thy house hath eaten me up, and the reproaches of them that reproach thee have fallen upon me (Psalm lxxviii. 10). The zeal of Thy house, O Lord, and of Thy honor and glory consumes and sets on fire my innermost heart, says the Royal Prophet, David; and the injuries and offenses done to Thee all fall upon me, and I take them as my own. This is another and quite a main means to help our neighbor; and our Father puts it among the other means that are to help to the preservation and increase of the Society and the attainment of the spiritual end for which it was instituted, which is the salvation of souls. These are his words: "A sincere zeal for souls, to the glory of Him Who has created and redeemed them, overriding the consideration of any other gain"—*quovis alio emolumento posthabito*. And the blessed St. Augustine, in his "Exhortation to a Certain Count," says: "O my brother, is our flesh of iron that it does not tremble, is our heart of adamant that it is not softened, or at least awakened, at those words which Christ our Redeemer will say to the wicked at the day of judgment: *Depart from me,*

ye cursed, into everlasting fire! Why do we not say with the Prophet Jeremy: *Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, to weep day and night over the slain of my people!* (Jerem. ix. 1)" Their eyes are worn out with weeping who consider the deaths, not of the bodies, but of the souls, of their brethren. What lamentation is better bestowed than theirs who feel and bewail with the Apostle St. Paul the loss of souls: *Who is weak and I am not weak?* (II Cor. xi. 29). Let us learn from the Apostle, says the glorious Augustine, to have this great zeal and desire for the salvation of souls, since God Himself has loved them so far as to *spare not his own Son, but give him up to death for us all* (Rom. viii. 32). He gave him up for us all. *For all*, he says, that we may not make light of the salvation of anyone, since everyone has cost God His lifeblood.

This zeal for souls, or to say better, for the honor and glory of God, is a fire of love for God; it is an ardent and inflamed desire for all men greatly to love, honor, and serve God; and he who has it would fain make this desire and this fire be enkindled and seize upon all men, and does all in his power to bring that about. And when he sees God offended and injured and is unable to stop it, he groans and laments; and this fire eats him up and wastes away and consumes his flesh. Such was the zeal that those great saints and friends of God had, as the Prophet Jeremy, who says (xx. 9): "There in my heart and in my bones there raged a fire, which burned and consumed me, seeing the offenses committed against the majesty of God, and I could not endure it." And again Elias: *Zeal for the Lord God of hosts set me on fire, because the children of Israel have forsaken the covenant* (III Kings xix. 14). And the Royal Prophet, David, was full of it: *Faintness seized me on account of sinners who forsake thy law. Zeal for thy honor hath wasted me away, because mine enemies have despised thy words* (Psalm cxviii. 53, 139). So great was

the pain and affliction that those saints felt at seeing sinners so recklessly breaking the law of God, that for grief of soul their body was wasted away, and their blood curdled and was poisoned, and their whole outer man gave signs of it. *I saw the transgressors and I wasted away, for that they kept not thy commandments* (Psalm cxviii. 158). So severely was the Prophet David burned and consumed by this fire that he was moved and melted away to tears. *My eyes were as fountains of tears, because they kept not thy law* (Psalm cxviii. 136). That is, *by reason of them that kept not thy law*, as another translation has it. As when they light an alembick or still, so did he melt into tears, seeing the offenses committed against the majesty of God. We should have this zeal for the honor of God, and this should be the greatest of our solitudes, to see the honor of God prospered and promoted, His name hallowed and glorified, His most holy will done on earth as it is done in heaven; and the greatest of our griefs should be to see that it is not so done, but quite the contrary. This, says the glorious St. Augustine, is to have zeal for the honor of God. He is on fire and consumed with zeal for the honor of God who desires and tries to remedy all the evils that he sees; and when he cannot remedy them, groans and weeps, as Samuel did for Saul: *And Samuel mourned for Saul, because God had repented of having made him King of Israel* (I Kings xv. 35).

This zeal for the honor and glory of God and the salvation of souls is one of the things that are most pleasing to God of all that we can do in His service, or even the most of all. So says St. Gregory: "There is no sacrifice so pleasing to God as zeal for the salvation of souls." St. Chrysostom says the same, and so do many saints. The reason of it is that nothing pleases God more than charity, which is the greatest of virtues, as St. Paul says (I Cor. xiii. 13); in that consists perfection, and so he calls it *the bond of perfection* (Col. iii. 14); the tie and crossbeam of

perfection, because it is that which joins and unites us to God. Now this zeal is a great and excellent love of God, for, not content with itself loving and serving God all it can, it desires that all men should be taken up with His love and serve Him, and that His holy name be known, revered, glorified, and exalted by all, and the kingdom of God extended and amplified. This is all its joy and satisfaction, and the offenses and sins committed against God pierce it to the quick. And as a good son who greatly loves his father greatly desires his honor and advancement, and all his joy is to see his father honored and exalted, and the injuries and offenses done him he feels as his own, and more than his own, so is he who has this zeal for the honor of God. So great is the love that he bears to his Lord, and so fervent his desire that His Divine Majesty be praised and honored by all, that this is all his delight and joy; and his greatest pain and grief is to see the great forgetfulness that there is of God on earth, and the offenses and injuries done Him. And so this is a great and excellent act of the love of God.

It is also a very great and very excellent act of love of our neighbor; because, as love of God is shown in our rejoicing in His greater honor and glory and resenting the offenses committed against Him, so also true love of our neighbor is shown in our rejoicing at his good, and being afflicted at his true evils, which are his sins, and seeking to hinder them to the best of our power. And so the saints say: Whoever wishes to examine whether he bears love to his neighbor, let him see whether he bewails his faults and rejoices in his graces and spiritual improvement. This is the proof of true love of your brother, that you rejoice at his good as at your own and feel his affliction and misfortune as if it were yours. This is loving your neighbor as yourself, as St. Paul did when he said: *Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble and I am not on fire?* (II Cor. xi. 29). The gloss there says: "Who falls

into any sin, and it does not go to my heart? Who suffers any annoyance, and I am not full of compassion for him as though it were my own?"

This is so pleasing to God that St. Chrysostom says that, though you were to do great penances, fast all your life and sleep on the ground, and give all your substance to the poor, that bears no comparison with this zeal for the conversion of souls. As much as the soul is better and more precious than the body, so much more do they whose occupation it is to help and heal souls by confession, preaching, advising, and other spiritual works of mercy, than others who busy themselves remedying bodily needs or giving great alms out of their possessions. How satisfied would you feel if you had given many a thousand guineas in alms! But it is more and goes for more to busy yourself in helping the salvation of souls. St. Chrysostom adds that zeal for souls is worth more before God than working miracles; since Moses worked many wonderful miracles in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, but for all that he did nothing equal to the zeal and fervent charity with which he interceded with God, saying: *Lord, either pardon this people their sin, or blot me out of thy book* (Exod. xxxii. 31-32). St. Chrysostom says this was the greatest feat that Moses ever did, though he had done so many wonderful things.

CHAPTER XI

What an Efficacious Means This Zeal Is for Helping and Improving Our Neighbor

THIS zeal is a grand and very effectual means of helping our neighbor. In the first place, because it is a fire, as we have said. As fire is very active, and works to convert all things into itself, actually doing so if the material be disposed thereto, and if not, proceeding so to dispose it;

so, if this fire and zeal of love of God is burning in our hearts, we shall thereupon communicate it to others, and set them on fire with love of God, and convert them into ourselves, making them be as we are, as St. Paul said: *I would have you all be as I am* (Acts xxvi. 29) ; and while they are not, we shall dispose them to be so. Charity stands not idle, since it is a fire that never rests, but is always crackling. "Charity is ever at work on great things," says St. Gregory; "if it is not working such things, either it will not be at all, or anyhow it will not be great charity."

In the second place, this zeal is a main means of helping our neighbor, inasmuch as the outcome of it is a great application to our ministries, and a constant desire and seeking of occupation in aid of our neighbor, so that there is no need to bring us up to the mark by force—a thing that we should be ashamed to require, as we should always be found standing in readiness and desiring to do far more than we get a chance of doing. This goes for much, since it is clear that we do twice as much work when we go at it with great zest. This zeal, then, is of great consequence, that we may look alive, and not be as dead men.

In the third place, there springs from this zeal the seeking of means to help our neighbor, and the finding of them, too, since good will is a great inventor and finder of means to gain its end. St. Bonaventure says there is no fear of him who has this zeal not finding what to do in aid of his neighbor, or not finding the means of doing it. If he finds nothing to do in the house, he will go and seek it outside; if he does not find it where he sought it, he will go to the hospital or the prison, where he will be sure to find it. Workers who have this zeal will always find something to do. Therefore Scripture calls them sometimes *hunters*. *I will send them many hunters to follow the game in the glens and warrens; and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and every hillside, and from the caverns of the rocks*, says God by Jeremy (xvi. 16). At other times it

calls them *fishers*, for the fisherman does not wait for the fish to come to his hand, but goes to seek them, and plies them with divers manners of gins and dainty bait. Now since the devil is so diligent in the ruin of souls, it is only right that we should be the like to save them.

In the fourth place, where this zeal is, everything becomes easy, all difficulties are overcome, no labor stands in the way. St. Denis the Areopagite seems to attribute to this zeal the way that Christ our Redeemer bore with such constancy and fortitude the labors and sufferings of His Passion. He says that the indignation which He conceived against sin helped Him in this conflict, and quotes to this effect the text of the Prophet Isaias: *I have trodden the wine press alone, and of the nations there is not a man with me: I have trodden them down in my fury, and trampled on them in my anger; and my very indignation hath aided me to come out victorious* (Isaias lxiii. 3, 5). It was the indignation and anger that He conceived against sin, he says, that aided Him.

In the fifth place, from this zeal there springs also fervent prayer, which does not let go of God until it has carried its purpose; as we read of many saints who interposed as mediators between God and His people, and ceased not and rested not until they had appeased God by prayer. Of our blessed Father Ignatius it is recounted in his Life that there was a man in Paris carrying on an intrigue with a woman with whom he was desperately in love. As Ignatius could find no way of stopping this, he set himself to wait for him one day outside the city; and, knowing that he must pass close by a pond or pool of water on his way to the place whither his blind and foul passion was carrying him, Ignatius went into the icy-cold water up to his shoulders; and when he saw him passing by, he cried out to him aloud: "Go, misguided lad, go and enjoy your filthy gratification. Do you not see the anger of God ready to strike you? Are you not afraid of hell, open-mouthed to devour

you? of the scourge that awaits you, soon to come down in full force upon you? Go, for here I will be suffering and doing penance for you, until God in His mercy abates the just punishment that He has prepared for you." The man stood still, dumbfounded at such an example of charity; and, smitten by the hand of God with shame and amazement, he turned back and gave up the shameful and dangerous attachment that held him captive.

CHAPTER XII

Of Three Things That Will Help Us to Have This Zeal

BESIDES what has been said, three things especially will be a great help to us to have this zeal and to desire and work diligently for the salvation of souls. The first and chiefest will be the great love and regard that the Son of God had for souls, since He gave His lifeblood for them and thought it well spent. The blood of Christ on the earth is a great sign of the value of a soul, of the regard that God has for it, and of the love that He bears it. This is what should move and animate us ever to go about our ministries with zeal and solicitude, and to make our heart go out to souls and the care of their salvation. *The love of Christ urgeth us on*, as St. Paul said (II Cor. v. 14), continually soliciting and compelling us to this end. How shall we not give our blood for him for whom the Son of God gave His? How shall we not give our life in His cause, Who died to give us life? How is it tolerable that God shall have died for a soul and I see that soul going to perdition and falling into hell, while I might help it and do not? Charity cannot endure such a thing. Our heart should go out to souls, and this should be the greatest of our cares, as it was of the Apostle St. Paul. Amid all the exterior afflictions which he suffered, which were very great, what gave him most concern and pressed heaviest upon him was his solicitude for the churches and for souls.

St. Augustine on those words: *Jesus, fatigued with his journey, sat down, a weary man, by the fountain* (John iv. 6), quotes also another passage from St. Matthew (xxiii. 37): *How often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not*, and says that Christ is very aptly likened to a hen. As for other birds, you would not know them for mothers, nor for having young, except when you see them sitting; but when the hen has chickens she looks so thin and worn out, droops her wings so, her feathers stand so on end, her note is so hoarse, the bird is so out of condition and languishing that, even though there were no chickens following her, you could tell at once that she is a mother. So, says St. Augustine, went Christ our Redeemer on His quest for souls, worn out, weary, and tired. So, then, we should have such zeal for souls, and be so careful and anxious to rear spiritual children that it should render us enfeebled, exhausted, and forgetful of all our own comforts, as we see in Christ that, though worn out with His journey and hunger, He nevertheless refused to eat, making more account of the salvation of souls than of the nourishment necessary for His own body. So, when His disciples bade Him eat, He replied: *I have other food to eat that ye know not of: lift up your eyes and see the fields, white and ready for the harvest* (John iv. 32, 35); soon you will see the Samaritans come and be converted. This is My food, the conversion of souls. The same also ought to be ours.

Father Master Avila makes a good reflection to move us to this zeal. He says that, though on the one hand it is quite true that God seeks and requires no return for the favors that He does us, because what He gives, He gives for pure love; still, looking at the matter another way, there is nothing that He gives for which He does not expect a return; not for any profit of His own, since He is the rich and thrice-wealthy Lord of all things and has need

of nothing, but for the profit of our neighbors, who are in need of being loved and helped. He illustrates this by a good comparison. It is as when one man has lent another large sums of money and done him many other good turns, and says to him: "Of all that I have done for you I have need of nothing. All the right and claim I have upon you, I cede and transfer to the person of So-and-So, who is in need, or is my relation or servant; give him what you owe me, and thereby I take myself as paid." This is the way in which we should regard our neighbor. We should enter into an account with God, and consider the vast benefits that we have received at His hand: how He has created me and redeemed me with His own blood; also the particular benefits that He has done me, not punishing me for my sins, bringing me to repentance in hope, rendering me good for evil, and other countless favors that I cannot record. Thereupon we should reckon that all these debts and bonds God cedes and makes over to our neighbor, and professes Himself paid by the service and good works that we do for Him. In this way will zeal and love of our neighbors burn in our heart; on the one hand we consider them as adopted sons of God and brethren of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, Who has given His lifeblood for them; and on the other, we view them as creditors to whom God has ceded and made over the heavy debt that we owe Him for the great and countless favors that He has done us.

It will also be a great help to us to consider that one of the best means that we can take to make satisfaction for the many offenses that we have committed against God, will be to help and be instrumental to others' ceasing to offend Him and coming to serve Him henceforth in earnest, according to that saying of the Apostle St. James: *He that shall convert a sinner from the error of his ways, shall deliver his own soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins* (James v. 20). St. Augustine observes this well on that passage of St. Luke, when Christ our Redeemer

cured the man of the legion of devils that tormented him. The Sacred Text says that, seeing himself cured, he wished to remain with Christ in gratitude for the benefit received; and the Lord would not agree to that, but bade him go and preach and publish the favors that He had done him. *Return to thy house, and relate all the things that the Lord hath done for thee.* And so he did. *And he went all through the city, telling what Jesus had done for him* (Luke viii. 39). This is what the Lord asks of you in return and recompense for the blessing that He has bestowed on you in drawing you out of the world, out of so many sins and dangers as there are in it, that you help others to get out of sin and serve God with their whole heart.

CHAPTER XIII

What Is the Good and True Zeal That Pleases God, and What Not

THERE are apparent virtues that are not true virtues, but false and pretended, as the Wise Man says of humility: *There is one who humbleth himself cunningly, and his interior is full of guile* (Ecclus. xix. 23). There are those who appear humble, and are not. They wear poor clothes, walk with their heads down and their eyes on the ground, speak in a humble tone, heave many a sigh, and call themselves miserable sinners at every breath; but give them a flick with a slight word, and they at once let it be seen what they are within, for all that exterior was a vain show and a make-up. So the Apostle says that there are certain sorts of zeal that appear good, and yet are not good, but indiscreet. *They have zeal, but not according to knowledge* (Rom. x. 2). Such was the zeal of the disciples of Christ, St. James and St. John, when, seeing that the Samaritans would not receive them, they waxed mighty

wroth and said: *Lord, shall we bid fire come down from heaven, and burn and consume them all?* So the Redeemer of the world chid them, saying: *Ye know not of what spirit ye are.* You know not the spirit of the law of grace, which does not consist of severities and chastisements. *The Son of Man came not to destroy men, but to save them* (Luke ix. 54-56). In order, then, that we may not go astray in a matter of so much importance, we will here explain what is the zeal that is not according to knowledge, and what is good and pleasing to God, that we may make sure of the one and avoid the other.

St. Denis the Areopagite treats this point very well. He says that, though blind men do not hit the road nor know where to go, and yet we do not beat them on that account nor get angry with them, but rather take them by the hand and guide them, having compassion on them; so we should behave to sinners, who are ignorant and blind, as the Prophet Sophonias says: *They shall walk as blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord* (Soph. i. 17). We should not be minded at once to beat them, or see them chastised or destroyed, but compassionate them, and teach them the way of truth, and guide and help them with great love and charity in imitation of Christ our Redeemer, Who went on the hills to seek the strayed and lost sheep, calling and whistling for it; and on finding it did not take the stick to it, but took it on His shoulders and brought it to His flock (Luke xv. 3-7). See it in the case of the prodigal son, how He behaved to him, and the loving-kindness with which He received him. This is the zeal that is good and according to God; other zeals and outbursts of indignation against sinners are not good, nor pleasing to God, because they are not to His nature nor according to His heart.

St. Dionysius relates to this purpose an instance, very good and very consoling, of what happened to St. Carpus, a man of many revelations, who never came to offer the

Holy Sacrifice without first getting a revelation to do so. He says that this saint told him this story. There was a recent convert to the faith of Jesus Christ, whom an unbeliever had perverted. Carpus was so pained and saddened at this that for grief he fell ill. This was in the evening. Midnight approached, at which time it was his custom to rise and praise God. He rose accordingly, full of zeal and indignation against the two of them; at the unbeliever for having perverted the new Christian; and at the Christian for having reverted to his unbelief. Putting himself in prayer, he began to complain to God, saying: "It is not just that the wicked should live; how long art Thou going to endure them? Send, Lord, fire from heaven to consume them." While he was at this, there seemed to come an earthquake which shook the whole house. The ground opened from above downwards on two sides, and he saw a huge fire that reached from there up to heaven. Above, on the other side, there in heaven, he saw Jesus Christ accompanied by innumerable angels; and, looking down below, he saw the earth yawning open, and a deep and dark gulf that reached down to hell, at which he stood horrified and amazed. The story goes on that there appeared those two men, the objects of his indignation, standing close to that opening in the earth, trembling and on the point of falling in; and that there came out from below fiery serpents, who sometimes twined and coiled themselves round their feet, and at other times with their teeth and horrid aspects and wriggings tried to make them fall into the abyss. There were black men also among the serpents, endeavoring to do the same, sometimes throwing things at them, sometimes pushing them. And St. Carpus went on to say that, as he had been so indignant against them and had asked God to send down fire from heaven to consume them, he now rejoiced to see them in this danger, and was only sorry and much annoyed that they did not once for all fall in—in fact, he thought he would have been

glad to have gone and given them a push. Upon this, he raised his eyes to heaven, and saw the most merciful Jesus giving signs of compassion for them and for the great danger they were in. He rose from His heavenly throne and, accompanied by the angels, descended to the spot where these wretches were, and gave them His hand to draw them out of that danger, and the angels received them into their company. Jesus Christ turned to St. Carpus, who was longing to give them a push that they might fall altogether, and said to him: "Put out thy hand and strike Me, since I am ready once more to suffer and die for sinners. Does it not seem to thee to be better to be in the company of angels than in the company of serpents and devils?" With that the vision disappeared, and the holy man stood corrected for his indiscreet zeal, and taught better in future—and we with him—to understand that these outbursts of zeal do not please God, Who wishes not the death of the sinner, sinners having cost Him much, and being His *Benjamins, the sons of His pain* (Gen. xxxv. 18). In great pains did He beget them on the Cross; they cost Him His lifeblood, and so He would not have them perish, but be converted and live forever.

The Prophet Jonah was very grieved and put out that God did not send upon the Ninevites the punishment that he had prophesied. And God said to him: "Thinkest thou that this is a good zeal? Thou art grieved that the ivy is dried up, at which thou didst not work, for the little shade it gave thee; and shall I not grieve on My own account at the destruction of a city, in which the children alone who have not come to the age of reason exceed one hundred and twenty thousand?" (Jon. iv. 9-11). That is also a marvelous utterance to this effect, which was spoken by the Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nice to a bishop named Acacius, who had shown himself very hard in admitting to the council those who had erred and were converted. The most religious and pious emperor said to him: "O Aca-

cius, get a ladder, and climb up to heaven alone, if you can." Another holy man in another similar case said to one who was showing great severity: "If this man had cost you your blood, as he has cost Christ, you would pick him up and receive him into your flock, and not leave him outside to be devoured by wolves."

In Exodus Holy Scripture gives us a marvelous example and pattern of good and true zeal such as God's servants should have. Our zeal should be such as Moses had when the children of Israel made the calf and worshipped it for an idol. St. Augustine makes very good reflection on this. Moses had gone up the mountain to receive from God the law which he was to give to the people, and had now received it on two tables, made by the hand of God and written also by His hand on both sides. He came down from the mountain and found that the people had made the calf and were adoring it. Whereupon he grew so angry that he broke to pieces the tables which he held in his hands. See, says St. Augustine, how angry Moses was at the sin of the people, since he broke the tables of the law which he had just received from God, made and written by God's own hand, and given with such solemnity and such great preparations, after having been forty days and forty nights on the mountain, fasting and conversing with God. But, though his anger and indignation against the sin was so great, nevertheless he returned at once to God to intercede for the people, and that with such persistence as to beg God either to pardon them or blot him out of His book. Of this sort, says the saint, should be the zeal of the true ministers of God. We should be so zealous for His honor that the offenses committed against His Divine Majesty should pierce us to the quick; and on the other hand be so full of compassion and pity for sinners as to put ourselves for mediators to appease God and obtain their pardon, as Moses did.

The like example we read also of the Apostle St. Paul.

I tell the truth in Christ Jesus, I lie not, my conscience bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I suffer great sadness and continued grief in my heart; for I should wish to be anathema from Christ for the salvation of my brethren, the children of Israel, who are my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. ix. 1-3). On the one hand the Apostle felt such great sadness and grief for the sins of his people, because he felt such great hatred and abhorrence for sin; and on the other he felt so great compassion and such desire of their good that he says he desired to be anathema for their salvation. The saints give many explanations of this desire of Moses and of St. Paul. St. Jerome explains it is to be understood of the death of the body. He says that these holy men desired to shed their blood and die the death of the body that the others might be alive in the spirit and be saved. St. Jerome proves that the word *anathema* is often used in Holy Writ for the death of the body. But, leaving out other explanations, the glorious Bernard gives one very tender and touching, as he usually does. He says that Moses speaks there with the affection and love of a father, or, to put it better, of a most loving mother, who can never be satisfied to see her children left out in the cold, not to share her joys. He illustrates this by an example. Suppose a rich man to give an invitation to a poor woman, and say to her: "You come and dine with me; but as for that infant in arms that you have got, you must leave him outside, because he will give us trouble with his crying." Think you that woman would accept the invitation under that condition? No, certainly not. She would rather go without her dinner than make such a bargain. "Either he must come in there with me," she would say, "or if not, I decline your invitation." In this way, then, Moses speaks, says St. Bernard. "I have no mind to enter into the joy of the Lord, and leave out in the cold the people of Israel," whom he loved as his children.

This affection of a mother, this heart of compassion and

love, are very pleasing to God; and our zeal ought to be of this sort. One of the virtues that best find a place in anyone who is working for God is this compassion for souls who are under the thralldom of the devil. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Put ye on hearts of mercy, as becometh the elect of God, holy and well-beloved* (Col. iii. 12), to fall in well with the likeness of the nature of God, and of that great High Priest Whom He has given us, of Whom the Apostle says: *We have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities* (Heb. iv. 15). Let us have compassion on our neighbor, as Christ has had compassion on us. St. Ambrose in the second book of his treatise on penance asks nothing else of God but that He would give him this tender compassion for sinners. And He did give it to him in such abundance, as Paulinus writes of him in his Life, that he wept with those who came to confession to him and declared to him their miseries. Penitents are better won over in this way than by severity and indiscreet zeal; for the love that the confessor shows the penitent, compassionating him and feeling his affliction and misery, wins his heart and greatly moves him to love also his confessor and be very fond of him, for there is nothing that moves one more to love than to see oneself loved. Anything that you say to him on this footing of love makes an impression on his heart; and though you rebuke him in this manner, he does not grow angry, because he takes the rebuke as coming from a true father. So St. Basil says that all our rebukes ought to be in the style of a mother caressing the child at her breast—*tanquam si nutrix foveat filios suos* (I Thess. ii. 7); so that the party rebuked may take it that the words come from a heart that loves him and desires his welfare and salvation. This is to know how to mingle oil and wine as the holy Gospel says in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 34), how to mingle and temper the strong wine of reprehension with the soft and sweet oil of compassion and mercy. This is the right

way to cure and heal wounds; whereas that other method of severe and harsh indignation and scolding not only does no good, but positively does harm, and alienates penitents not only from you, but from the Society, because they take it that all the rest of us are as ungracious and ill-tempered as you are. St. Bernard quotes to this purpose the example of Joseph, who in rebuking his brethren could not restrain his tears. He showed clearly that his words of fault-finding did not spring from anger and indignation, but from a tender and loving heart.

To have such a heart and such affections of tenderness and compassion for the sins of our neighbor, and not be indignant nor angry with him on that account, Father Master Avila alleges a consideration that will be very helpful. Our neighbor's sins may be looked at in two ways. First, as offenses and injuries done to God; and in that way they move to anger and indignation and desire of punishment. Secondly, as the calamity of our brother; and, looked at in that way, they do not move to anger, but to compassion; for no evil can come upon men that does them so much harm as sin, and so there is no more proper matter for compassion and mercy than guilt, regarded in that light. And the greater the sin, the more it calls for compassion, as doing the more harm and being the greater evil. As the injurious and bad language of a madman does not move us to anger, but to pity and compassion, since we regard it as the misfortune and infirmity of him who says such things, so God Himself is moved by our sins to compassion and not to anger when He takes a merciful view of them, not as an offense against Himself, but as our calamity and misery. In this way we should regard the sins of our neighbor as his calamity and loss, to compassionate them, as we would wish God to regard our sins, not with anger and justice to punish us, but with mercy and compassion to pardon and heal us. This will make a good zeal, a zeal according to the heart of God, Who is merciful and a doer of mercies.

CHAPTER XIV

*Of Another Means to Do Our Ministrations Well Is to
Keep Our Eyes on the Soul That Makes the Inner Man,
and Not on Outward and Exterior Appearances*

ONE of the chief warnings that saints and masters of spiritual life give to those who have to deal with their neighbor, is to keep their eyes on souls and not on bodies nor outward appearances. There are some, says St. Bernard, who look at the exterior, and fix their eyes on the well-featured and clean-limbed, on the well-dressed and well-groomed—these are their favorites and they delight in dealing with such; but those who make a wholesome use of their eyes look only at the interior of the soul, which is not more beautiful in a beautiful than in an ugly body, unless in that beautiful body there be a more beautiful soul than in the ugly one. But be the person ugly or beautiful, the soul is most beautiful if it is not befouled with sin; and the purer and clearer it is of sins, the more beautiful it is and the more adorned with virtues and heavenly gifts. Of no profit is the visible beauty of the body if the invisible beauty of the soul is wanting; the one is common to us with inanimate things and brute animals, but the other we share with the angels. We ought, says St. Bernard, to go there within and fix our eyes on the soul, which is made in the image and likeness of the most holy Trinity, and consider it as a living temple of the Holy Ghost and a member of Christ all bathed, as it were, in His blood, bought and redeemed at the price of His life. We should condole with it if we see it disfigured and befouled with sin, and feel great sentiment of compassion if we see thrown away upon it the price so dear which it has cost the Son of God. As for the body and all the outward man, we should keep off from it as much as is possible, and make no more account of it than of a sack of dung, a bag of uncleanness

and a dunghill covered with snow, or a sepulcher whited outside, for such is our body. And to such a degree do our instructors wish this to be observed, and with such care and caution would they have us walk that, as Gerson says, we should not notice whether the penitent or the person we are speaking to has agreeable features or the reverse, nor reflect whether it be man or woman, but fix our eyes on souls alone and their cure, abstracting from all the rest and making no account of it, for these differences do not affect souls.

This advice is of much importance; in the first place, because in this way our love will be spiritual, true charity in God and for God and unto God alone; the other is a carnal and sensual love, and very dangerous. In the second place, this advice is also very important to those of us who have to deal with our neighbor, to encourage us in our functions to exercise them as we ought, giving as hearty welcome to the poor and destitute as to the rich and powerful; seeing that the poor man in the workhouse, and the ragged beggar who comes to confession, has cost God as much for his soul as the knight and the well-dressed visitor. St. Ambrose quotes to this purpose the example of Christ our Redeemer, of Whom we read (John iv. 47) that He would not go to the house of the ruler to cure his son—though the father asked him, and had come in person with this request—that He might not seem to be moved by the fact that both the sick man and he who brought the request were persons of wealth and position. On the other hand we see that He offered to go to the house of the centurion to cure a servant of his, though the centurion had not come himself with the request, but had used the mediation of others (Luke vii. 2-6), that He might not seem to be disdainful to visit the sick person because he was a poor youth. This to give us an example, says St. Ambrose, how to behave with our neighbor, not paying regard to the rich, nor the well-born, nor the well-dressed, but to souls alone.

Our eyes and our heart should overlook this distinction of classes, welcoming as heartily the poor man and the stable-boy and the slave as the knight and the lord; since before God bondman and freeman, servant and master, are all one, as St. Paul says (Gal. iii. 28); God died for the one as for the other, and very possibly loves and values the beggar more than the grandee.

If our love be quite pure and spiritual, we shall be inclined more to converse with the poor than with the rich, with the lowly than with the great, and that for many reasons. First, to copy the example which Christ our Redeemer gave us, as we have said. Secondly, because in these poor humble folk there better shines forth the image of Christ, *who being rich made himself poor for our sakes, to enrich us with his poverty*, as the Apostle says (II Cor. viii. 9). Thirdly, because in this way we are safer and surer of seeking God in our ministries and doing them purely for Him. In dealing with persons of quality and distinction, human considerations very often come in and we seek ourselves and our own tastes and credit. These transactions are not so safe, nor always so pure and clear of dust and chaff; sometimes that is vanity which has the appearance of zeal. Fourthly, because thus we keep ourselves better in humility. Fifthly, because it is seen by experience that more good is done with the one class of folk than with the other; the poor are they who frequent the confessional and attend better at sermons; and so we see that even with Christ our Redeemer the poor were they who followed Him most and profited most by His doctrine. *The poor have the gospel preached to them*, says the holy Gospel (Matt. xi. 5). Of the wealthy and leading men there came one here and there, such as Nicodemus, who was a leader among the Jews; and even of him the Apostle St. John says that he came to see Jesus Christ secretly and by night (John iii. 2).

Another thing, to simple folk we tell home truths more

plainly, and rebuke what is amiss in them with greater liberty, and they take it better. It is easier for a confessor to do what he wishes with them; whereas with men of rank there has to be sometimes some drawing in; the confessor does not dare to say so much to them, and purses his lips to tell them what is necessary, and is often left with scruples and remorse of conscience for not having spoken more plainly and having humored them and temporized with them too much. Again, great people take up a deal of your time, and in that time there is little or no good done; but with simple folk much is done in a short time, because there and then you can come to the point with them, and the whole conversation turns on what really matters, which is not the case with the others. On this account spiritual men, men detached from the world, lovers of their own spiritual progress and anxious to do real good to other people, do their best to avoid all dealings with lords and grandees, reckoning their company for a nuisance. So the saints often advise us, according to the saying of the Wise Man: *He takes a burden on himself, who deals with the high and mighty* (Ecclus. xiii. 2). So we see that in religion they are much valued and esteemed, and with good reason, who set themselves to hear the confessions of the poor and the black man, and servants and ragged beggars. I'll warrant you that the others will never want a confessor; and if it happen that there be anyone of whom you think that any kind turn done to him would make much for the service of God, you, if you are humble, should think that some other father of those who hear confessions in the church will do the job better than you and with less danger to himself; and do you meanwhile lend a hand to that poor man who possibly has been up several times and has had to go away without confession.

CHAPTER XV

*Of Another Means of Helping Our Neighbor, Which Is to
Abandon All Confidence in Ourselves and Put
Our Whole Trust in God*

HAVE confidence in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not on thine own prudence (Prov. iii. 5). Another and quite a main means that will help us greatly in attaining the end of our institute, is what the Wise Man says here, and our Father also lays it down, and so does the bull of our institute: "Distrusting their own strength, and confiding in that of God." Do you know, it says, how to make great gain and do great good to souls? Distrust yourself, your own strength, prudence, and industry, and all human means, and put all your confidence in God. This is one of the chiefest and most effectual means for producing fruit in souls; so it is one of the best dispositions that a workman in God's vineyard can have to understand that of himself he can do nothing that is of any good, and so to place his entire trust in God. These are the sort of men whom our sovereign Lord uses as instruments to do great things by them, and to work great and marvelous conversions. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *We have confidence through Christ in God; not that we are sufficient to do anything of ourselves, not so much as to have one good thought; but our whole sufficiency must come of God, who hath made us fit ministers of the New Testament* (II Cor. iii. 4-6). St. Augustine, referring to the praise that Christ Himself bestowed on Nathaniel: *Behold a true Israelite, in whom there is no guile* (John i. 47), says: "One would have thought that a man like that should have been called to the apostolate first of all, since the Son of God bears him such witness; yet we see that he was not called first, nor midway, nor last. What can be the reason of this? Nathan-

iel [or Nicodemus: John iii. 1, 10*] was a learned man, a doctor of the law, and therefore he was not chosen to the apostolate, because Christ was not minded to choose doctors to preach His Gospel and convert the world, but poor fishermen, unlettered, common men. *The weak things of this world hath God chosen* (I Cor. i. 27.)

St. Gregory alleges to this purpose the story in the Book of Kings (I Kings xxx.). When the Amalekites set fire to Siceleg, and led away into captivity David's women and those of his companions, and their children, one of them left behind on the road an Egyptian servant because he had fallen sick and could not follow. David met with this poor sick man, almost on the point of expiring because he had been three days and three nights without eating or drinking. David gave him food, and brought him round, and took him for a guide on the way, and by his guidance tracked the Amalekites and found them eating and making good cheer with much feasting and rejoicing. He fell upon them and slew them and recovered the booty that they had made. This, says St. Gregory, is the behavior of the true David, Christ our Redeemer, Who gathers the forlorn outcasts of the world, brings them back to their right senses with the food of His word, and uses them for His guides, making them preachers of His Gospel, to overcome and destroy the Amalekites, that is, worldlings, who feast and make merry, entertaining themselves with the delights and pastimes of the world.

But let us see why God acts thus and why He chooses weak instruments for so lofty an undertaking. The Apostle tells us (I Cor. i. 29-31) it is that man may not trust in himself nor take occasion to attribute anything to himself, but may put all his confidence in God, attribute all to Him, and give Him the glory of all. God sets much store by this; and that we may have this truth well brought home to us, and hold it fixed and stamped on our

*Nathaniel Bar Tholomaeus, St. Bartholomew probably.

hearts, we find Holy Writ full of instances of God's choosing weak instruments for the doing of great things, since in this way it is better understood that it is He Who does them, and not we. This redounds to the greater glory of God, and in this way His greatness and omnipotence become more evident. Many were the wonders that God wrought by means of Moses in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, but in none of them did the Egyptians better come to know the might and power of God than when Moses struck the dust of the earth with his rod and converted it into gnats, and covered the whole land with them. Then Pharaoh's magicians, after trying all their arts and enchantments, confessed that they could not do that, and said, *The finger of God is here* (Exod. viii. 19) ; this is the finger of God and a sensible sign of His great might and power. In the war that Sapor, King of the Persians, waged against the Romans, he had besieged with a huge army the city of Nisibis, which some call the Antioch of Migdonia. The bishop of the city was a holy man named James. The Church history relates that the citizens begged this holy man to come to the ramparts and from thence curse the army of the enemy. At their request the venerable bishop mounted a tower, and saw thousands of people on whom he imprecated no other curse, nor asked God for any other calamity to fall upon them, than fleas and mosquitoes, that, worn out by these vile little insects, they might recognize the sovereign power of the Almighty. No sooner had he finished his prayer than there came down upon the Persians hosts of fleas and mosquitoes. They filled to swelling the trunks of the elephants, and the nostrils and ears of the horses and other animals in the army. Unable to stand the stings of these little creatures, they pranced and upset the men they were carrying, flung their drivers to the ground and broke their necks, and, running wildly, they routed the battalions and all the goodly array of the army. In this way King Sapor came to recognize

the power of God and the providence which He exercises over His own. He raised the siege and went back to his own land, mortified and ashamed. With fleas and mosquitoes God can make war on all the emperors and monarchs of the world; and so He chose to do in this case, the better to make it appear that it was He Who did it, that so it might redound to His greater glory and honor. To this same purpose God chooses also weak means and instruments to do high things for the conversion of souls. In Church histories we have many examples of conversions of great sinners, infidels and heretics, whom many bishops and many very learned men had been unable to convert in general councils where was gathered the flower and cream of the Church; and at the end of it all they came to be converted by means of a plain, unlearned man, and by very ordinary and simple words, that so we may learn to distrust ourselves and trust in God, and give Him the glory of it all.

Hence we must draw three lessons. The first is, not to be discouraged or lose heart at seeing our poverty and misery, and the small store of ability that we have for so high an end and institute and the exalted functions that we have in the Society; but rather to take thence occasion to encourage ourselves and have more confidence in God, since this is His way, to take such instruments to do by their means great and wonderful things. That was the very good answer which the blessed St. Francis made to his companion on this matter. It is related in his chronicles how Friar Maseo, the constant companion of St. Francis, was minded one day to test the humility of the saint. Understanding and knowing full well his relish and desire of being slighted, he went up to him and said to him: "Tell me, whence is it that all the world runs after you, all want to see and hear you and do your bidding? You are not learned, you are not high-born, you are not handsome, you are not an eloquent man; whence comes it that all the world runs after you?" St. Francis replied, like the true humble

man that he was: "Would you know, my brother, whence it is to me that all the world is on my track? From the immense goodness of God, Who has cast His eyes on me, the greatest sinner, the greatest simpleton, the vilest creature of all that there are in the world. It is because God chooses the weak and simple things of the world, thereby to confound the great and powerful, that all the glory and honor be to God, and no creature may be able to glory in His sight (I Cor. i. 27-29), but he that glorieth may glory in the Lord, and to Him alone be given glory and honor forever." This should be our answer, this should be our comfort and all our confidence.

The second lesson that you have to learn hence is that, though God produce great fruit in souls through your ministry, and work great conversions and even miracles, you should not be proud nor think more of yourself on that account, but remain as rooted in your knowledge of yourself and your own mean condition as if you had done nothing, since you have not this of your own strength; it is God who works by your means. Oh, how well does the Prophet David teach us this, theory as well as practice! "Lord, we have heard with our ears, and our forefathers have told us, the wonderful works that Thou didst do in their days, in those olden times. It is Thou, O Lord, Who didst do those wonders, and Thine were those exploits, not theirs. It was Thy powerful hand, O Lord, that did destroy the nations, and cast them out of their land, and planted and placed our ancestors in their stead. Thou didst do it, O Lord; it was not their arms nor their bravery that did it. Thy right hand, Thy might and strength it is, O Lord, that wrought these wonders in them and for them; and that was not for their merit either, but because so it pleased Thee, O Lord, and Thou didst choose to do it, and wert pleased to have it so" (Psalm xliii. 2-4).

Thus we have nothing to be proud of in the fact that God works great things through our means; but rather,

the greater they are, the more we should feel confounded and humbled to think that He uses such weak and pitiful instruments for the doing of things so great and marvelous. We should behave herein as the Apostle St. Peter behaved when Christ our Redeemer wrought through his means that great take of fish. The Evangelist St. Luke narrates that Christ bade St. Peter put out his nets for fishing, and he replied: *Master, all night we have labored and caught nothing, but at thy word I will once more put out the net* (Luke v. 5). And when they did so, they caught such a quantity of fish that the net was ready to break, and they had to call to their mates who were in the other ship to come to their help and draw the net in, and they filled both boats with fish; such was the multitude of fishes that they threatened to sink the boats with their exceeding great weight. The holy Gospel says that, when St. Peter saw such a great miracle as this, *he fell at the feet of Christ, and said, Depart from me, O Lord, because I am a sinful man, and unworthy to be in Thy company: for he was astounded, and the rest who were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken* (Luke v. 8-9). Peter was amazed and astonished, and not less humbled and confounded, seeing that he had labored all night in vain, and when he cast the net in the name of Christ, he had caught such a quantity. With such amazement and astonishment, then, and with still greater humility and recognition of our own weakness and misery, we should be struck when our Lord does any great work through our means. How far was Peter from any vanity or pride at having caught such a great draught! You should be equally far from any vanity and pride when God accomplishes anything through your means, recognizing it to be a work of God and very unlike you. This it is to have no confidence in self, and confidence in God; this it is to attribute to oneself what is one's own, and to attribute to God what is God's. See what Peter did when he cast the nets in his own name;

and there you will see what you are worth and what you can do by your own means, industry, and diligence; and see what he did when he cast his nets in the name of Christ, and there you will see how much you can do by His grace and favor. Looking at the former, you will give up confiding in self; looking at the latter, you will gather strength and confidence in God. In this way, on the one hand we shall have no vanity, however great be the things that the Lord does by our means; and on the other hand we shall not be discouraged at the sight of our own weakness and lowliness.

St. Jerome starts this question: Let us see, he says, which of the two did better: Moses, who, when God sent him to lead His people out of Egypt, excused himself, saying that he was not fit for the work, and begged God to send a better man; or Isaias, who without being called or chosen volunteered to go and preach, saying, *Here I am, send me* (Isaias vi. 8). The saint answers that an excellent thing is humility, and knowledge of oneself and one's good-for-nothingness; and an excellent thing also is readiness and courage to serve and help one's neighbor; but if you ask which is the better thing, he says that with Moses we ought to take the side of humility, looking at our own weakness; and with Isaias we should pluck up heart and readiness, trusting in the mercy and goodness of the Lord, Who touched his lips and gave him confidence for the mission on which He sent him. Humility and confidence are not contraries, nor do they hinder one another, but rather humility is a help to putting all our confidence in God and gathering thence increase of courage and strength.

The third lesson to learn is this, that, though it is true that no one ought to be confident or rest upon his own efforts, yet we must put forward and bring to play on our part all the energies we can for the help of our neighbor, since to expect God to produce the fruit without our taking the means would be to ask for miracles and tempt

God. He wishes to make use of our aid for the conversion of souls, and so St. Paul calls us *fellow workers and co-operators with God* (I Cor. iii. 9). And on this account the Lord bade St. Peter cast his nets, and would not give him the fish except in that manner, to give us to understand that we are not to fold our arms and do nothing. And on the other hand that we should not attribute the good success and gain of souls to our own nets, our own industry and diligence, He would have it that Peter should first cast his nets and labor all night at fishing without taking anything. Thus we are to cast our nets and apply all possible means and use all diligence, as though that alone were sufficient to bring our concerns to issue; while on the other hand we are to distrust all that as though we had done nothing, and put our whole confidence in God. This it is that Christ our Redeemer teaches us in the holy Gospel: *When ye have done all things that are commanded you, say: We are unprofitable servants, we have done but what we ought to have done* (Luke xvii. 10). Where observe that He does not say: "When you have done something of what you ought," but "When you have done all that you ought;" giving us to understand that, however much diligence we show and however many means we employ, we are not to trust in that, but put all our confidence in God, attributing and giving to Him the glory of all. The saints set this down for the highest and most perfect humility, as we have said in its due place.

When St. Peter and St. John cured the man lame from his birth, who was begging alms at the gate of the Temple that was called Beautiful, the people, astonished at the miracle, flocked to gaze upon them as something divine; and the Apostle St. Peter said to them: *Ye men of Israel, why gaze ye in wonder at us as though we had done this by our own power? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus, whom ye gave up and denied before Pilate, when he judged that he*

ought to be set free (Acts iii. 12-13). The same thing happened in the case of St. Paul and St. Barnabas, on occasion of a similar miracle which they wrought, so that the people took them for gods, and wanted to adore and sacrifice to them as such, and brought crowns to crown them, saying: *Gods in human shape have come down amongst us*. They rent their garments, saying: "*What do ye? We too are mortal men like yourselves* (Acts xiv. 14); it is not we that could do such a deed, but God; to Him give this honor and glory." They remained seated in their humility, as though they had done nothing. So we should remain when we have done all that we ought in aid of souls.

CHAPTER XVI

Of the Great Efficacy of This Practice of Putting Confidence in God for the Obtaining of Blessings at His Hands

THE blessed St. Cyprian, explaining what God said to the children of Israel: *Every spot that your foot shall tread upon shall be yours* (Deut. xi. 24), says: "Your foot is your confidence—*pes vester spes vestra est*; and as far as it shall go, so far shall go your receiving of favors from God. All shall be yours, so far as the foot of your confidence goes." St. Bernard says the same. "If you have great confidence in God and hope great things of Him, great things will He grant you and do by your means; and if little, little. In the holy Gospel we read many examples which show this to us. That ruler of the synagogue who left his daughter dying, and when he came to Christ our Redeemer she was already dead, said: *Lord, my daughter is now dead, but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live* (Matt. ix. 18). He had some faith and confidence, since he believed that Christ could raise his daughter from the dead; but he had only a little, since he thought it was neces-

sary that He should go to the spot and lay His hand on her, and in that way he had confidence that she would live; and the Redeemer of the world did by him according to the measure of confidence that he had. He went there and found her dead, and took her by the hand and raised her. The other woman who had been suffering for twelve years from a flux of blood, and had spent all her substance on doctors, and they had not been able to cure her, came to Christ our Redeemer with a little more faith: *for she said within herself: If I can touch but his garment, I shall be healed* (Matt. ix. 21). She makes her way through the midst of the crowd, approaches, and touches the hem of His garment, and is healed at once. God dealt with her according to the faith and hope she had. But the centurion, with his paralytic servant, had more faith than either of them. He came to the Redeemer of the world and said to Him: "Lord, my servant is in bed palsied; but there is no need for Thee to go there to heal him, nor for him to come here to touch Thy garment; *say but the word, and my servant shall be healed* (Matt. viii. 8). While he remains there, Thou canst give command here, and he will be cured." See what great faith! *Jesus admired, and said to those about Him: Amen I say unto you, I have not found such faith in Israel* (Matt. viii. 10). And, turning to the centurion, He said to him: *According to thy faith be it done to thee. And the servant was healed that same hour* (Matt. viii. 13). He had confidence in Jesus Christ that by His mere word He could work the cure from where He stood; and He did heal him from where He stood, by His mere word. You see how God deals with us according to the confidence that we have in Him, acting up to the prayer of the Royal Prophet, David: *Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us as we have hoped in Thee* (Psalm xxxii. 22). Deep as shall be the vessel of your confidence shall be also the amount of water that it shall draw, says St. Cyprian.

So it also fared with the Apostle St. Peter. Christ our

Redeemer bade him come to Him on the waters; and so long as he had no fear, he walked on the surface of the sea as if it were dry land; and when he did begin to fear, seeing a strong wind getting up, at once he began to sink, and Christ reproached him for his little faith: *Man of little faith, why didst thou doubt?* (Matt. xiv. 31); giving him to understand that he was drowning because he got afraid and lost confidence. That is why it seems at times that we are drowning and perishing in temptations and afflictions and worry of affairs, because of the little confidence we have. Had we great confidence in God, He would help us and bring us well out of all these critical situations, and would do us many favors. When King Josaphat was much afraid of the Moabites and Ammonites, who were marching against the people of God, for the great multitude of their armies, God sent to say to him by a prophet: "Be not afraid of this multitude, for it is not your war, but God's. It is not you that have to fight; I only wish you to keep up your courage and confidence, and you shall see the favor of heaven upon you" (II Chron. xx. 15, 17). And forthwith they found it so; for while they kept quiet, God destroyed the army of the enemy, making them turn their arms against one another and slay one another.

Let us, then, consider how little God asks of us as a condition of giving us aid and victory over our enemies. So in the Ninetieth Psalm the Lord gives no other reason for protecting and delivering a man in time of tribulation than this, that he has hoped and confided in Him. *Because he hath hoped in me, I will deliver him: I will protect him, because he hath known my power and goodness.* St. Bernard makes marvelous exclamation on those words: "O most sweet liberality, never to be wanting to those who hope and have confidence in Him"—*Dulcissima liberalitas in se sperantibus non deesse. In thee, O Lord, have our fathers hoped, and thou hast delivered them: they had recourse and cried to thee, and they were saved: they put*

their whole trust in thee, and were not confounded (Psalm xxi. 5-6). Whoever cried to God and put his trust in Him, and was not heard and succored by His Divine Majesty! *Cast thine eyes on all nations and on all ages of the world*, says the Wise Man, *and thou wilt find that none hath hoped in God and been confounded* (Ecclus. ii. 11-12). Who has ever called upon Him and been despised by Him?

And, further, there is another reason, of which we have already spoken at length, and therefore here we need but touch upon it; it is that, when we cease to trust in ourselves and put our whole confidence in God, we attribute all to God and give Him charge of the whole business, and so we strongly bind Him to do His own business and stand up for His honor. Lord, this business of the conversion of souls is Thine, and not ours; as for us, what part can we have in it, if Thou dost not move their hearts? Stand up, then, O Lord, for Thine own honor and do Thine own business. Those are marvelous words to this effect with which Josuah importuned God and did violence to Him for the liberation of his people. It is very well for us, O Lord, to be humbled and overturned by our enemies, since we have well deserved it; but *what will become of thy great name?* (Jos. vii. 9). What will the heathen say when they see Thy people destroyed and in captivity? They will say that Thou couldst not bring them to the Land of Promise. Stand up, then, O Lord, for Thine own honor. *Not to us, but to thy name give glory* (Psalm cxiii. 1). We seek not honor and glory for ourselves; if we ask for it, it is for Thee. *Of the Lord our God is justice and holiness, but to us is due shame and confusion to our face* (Baruch i. 15). In every way, to have great confidence in the Lord is a sure means of making Him do us favors, for the great satisfaction which such confidence gives Him. *The good pleasure of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy* (Psalm cxlvi. 11).

We who live under obedience have another very particu-

lar reason for having great confidence in the aid of the Lord attending upon our ministries. It is that He it is Who has ordered it and puts us to such work, and therefore gives us strength for what He orders and will draw us well out of it. Holy Writ relates that God commanded Moses to make the Tabernacle, and the Ark of the Covenant, and the mercy-seat that was to be over it, and the altar, and the table of shewbread, and many vessels besides that were needed for the service of the Tabernacle. And God gave the plan of it all, how it was to be, and the proportions to be observed, and added that, for the doing of all this well and in conformity with the plan laid down, He had chosen Beseleel and Ooliab, and given them knowledge and skill to know how to execute all possible designs in gold, silver, precious stones, brass, marble, and every sort of wood; and they would carry out right well all that He had told them (Exod. xxxi. 1-6). Now if to make a material tabernacle God was so careful to give infused knowledge to those artificers who were to execute the work, what will He do for the workers and ministers of the Gospel, who have to build and elaborate the spiritual tabernacle of souls, souls who are living temples of God and the dwelling of the Holy Ghost, and to widen and extend the house and kingdom of God? As the spiritual is more than the material and of greater consequence before God, so much greater confidence should we have that He will give us all that is necessary for doing well the work for which God has chosen us. So the holy Gospel says: "When you come before princes and emperors and the great ones of the world to answer and stand up for the honor of God, trouble not yourselves to think how you are to speak, for God will teach you then what you are to say, for it is not you who speak, but God Who speaks in you" (Matt. x. 19-20). *I, says Christ our Redeemer, will give you utterance and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall be unable to resist or contradict* (Luke xxi. 15). And that was well seen in the glorious

Protomartyr St. Stephen, of whom it is said in the Acts of the Apostles (vi. 10), that all who disputed with him were unable to resist the spirit and wisdom that spoke in him.

CHAPTER XVII

How Very Displeasing to God Is Want of Confidence

AS by confidence in God we greatly honor and please His Divine Majesty, and it is a means to draw down upon us many blessings at His hands, so on the contrary one of the things by which God is most offended, a thing which most particularly displeases Him and which He punishes with the greatest severity, is want of confidence, since that touches His honor. So we see that this was one of the things for which God was most angry with the children of Israel and for which He punished them. Holy Scripture relates that, when Moses sent the spies into the Land of Promise, they came back in consternation and told the people that they had seen giants so stout and strong that in comparison with them they were as locusts; and cities they had seen so fortified with walls and towers that there was no making way into them. Thereupon such terror fell upon the people and such despair of ever being able to enter into the Land of Promise, that they debated among themselves the question of choosing a captain to lead them back into Egypt. God was very angry with the people, and said to Moses: *How long shall this people fail to believe or trust me, after having seen so many signs and wonders as I have done for them? I will send upon them a pestilence, and put an end to them all at one stroke* (Num. xiv. 11-12). Moses set himself to mediate, and implored God to pardon them; and God said: "For love of thee I pardon them for the present; but all those who have seen the wonders and signs that I did in Egypt, and afterwards in the desert, and have

failed to believe and trust Me, shall be excluded from entering into the Land of Promise. I warrant thee, not one shall set eyes upon it." And as He swore it, so He carried it out. Six hundred thousand men were they whom God delivered from Egypt, not counting women and children (Num. i. 46), and all died in the desert without entering into the Land of Promise or setting eyes upon it, in punishment of their want of confidence. Josuah and Caleb alone, who had the confidence to believe that they should enter and overcome the enemy, and encouraged the people thereto, did enter, and the little children, who, the spies said, were sure to be made captives and the prey of their enemies. Hereby is seen how much God abhors want of confidence in Him.

Even Moses himself and Aaron, because in striking the rock with their rod they had some doubt as to whether they should draw water, whereas God had told them that they should draw it, for this want of confidence were punished in the same way. *Because ye have not believed nor trusted me, to sanctify me in the sight of the children of Israel, ye shall not be the men who shall lead this people into the land which I will give them* (Num. xx. 10, 12); ye shall not enter into the Land of Promise either. Moses saw it from a mountain top hard by, but entered not into it. *Thou hast seen it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not enter therein* (Deut. xxxiv. 4); as though to say: "Thou hast seen it, but thou shall not enjoy it." This matter of distrust is a matter that touches the honor of God, and therefore He punished it in this manner.

Hence we may draw two lessons. First, how evil and how displeasing to God are these fits of distrust and discouragement in which some people indulge—now in temptations, at other times on the question of their spiritual advancement, at others in the functions and affairs which obedience imposes upon them. They fancy these fits proceed from humility, and in reality they proceed from nothing but pride; for they fix their eyes on themselves, expecting to

be able to do the thing out of their own strength, industry, and diligence, which is great pride. The second lesson that we must draw from hence is that, in all our affairs, necessities, and labors, the first thing to do is to have recourse to God and put our whole trust in Him. It should not be the first thing to fix our eyes on human means and on our own diligence and industry, and the last thing to have recourse to God. That is a great abuse, common in the world. The first thing people do is to fix their eyes on human means, and try them all without recourse to God; then, when they find that nothing comes of it and the business seems desperate, they betake themselves to God. So His Majesty allows these very human means to fail us in which we trusted, as He said to King Asa: *Because thou hast put thy trust in the king of Syria, and not in the Lord thy God, therefore his army hath escaped thy hand* (II Chron. xvi. 7). God is mightily offended and aggrieved at our falling back upon any basis of support but Him. Our eyes should be turned to God at once. One of the chief things that we can gain in meditation is to have firm-seated in our heart this great confidence in God; for we go to meditation to plant virtues in our soul, and this is one of the chiefest and most necessary of virtues. We must not rest until our heart is thoroughly habituated to have recourse to God in all things, and thoroughly trusts in Him, not going to seek remedy elsewhere but in God, God being all our refuge and our whole strength, according to those words of Josaphat, King of Israel: *Since we know not what we ought to do, we have this only remaining to us to lift up our hearts to thee* (II Chron. xx. 12). *Blessed is the man whose hope is in the name of the Lord* (Psalm xxxix. 5).

CHAPTER XVIII

*That We Must Not Be Discouraged nor Lose Heart,
Though We See Little Fruit Produced by Our
Labors among Our Neighbors*

WOE is me, that I am become as one who goes to gather grapes in autumn, and finds not one bunch to eat (Mich. vii. 1). The Prophet Micheas complains in these words of the little fruit that he produced in the people of Israel by his discourses. Woe is me, he says, because that has befallen me which is wont to befall those who go gleanng grapes in the autumn after the vintage is over, thinking to find something, and find not one single bunch. Isaias makes the like complaint: *The city is made a desert, and her gates shall be stricken with solitude: for it shall be in the midst of the land and in the midst of the people as the few berries that fall by shaking an olive tree that has already been beaten, and the gleanings that remain when the vintage is over: so shall be the number of the good* (Isaias xxiv. 12-13). One of the things that are apt greatly to discourage and take the heart out of those whose business it is to aid and improve their neighbor is to see the little good that is done by their sermons and the other means that they take to that end. How few are converted, how few are improved and amended, and how few persevere! Since this is a very common complaint and temptation, we will meet it here and make use of a very good remedy to give us courage and comfort in our ministries. St. Augustine treats this point very well, and answers and satisfies this complaint by the example of Christ our Redeemer and Master. Think you, he says, that the Son of God preached only to His disciples, or only to the people that were sure to believe in Him? Do we not see that He preached also to His enemies, who came to tempt Him and find matter of misrepresentation in Him? Or perhaps He

preached only when He had a crowd and a great many listeners? Do we not see Him preaching to one single woman, of low rank, a Samaritan woman, a watercarrier, and with her He dealt with the question of prayer, whether it was to be in the Temple, or might be made outside its walls? But, you will say, He knew that she was destined to believe and profit by His conversation and discourse. True, says St. Augustine; but what will you say to the many times that He spoke and preached to the Jews, Pharisees, and Sadducees, who not only were not going to believe, but were going to calumniate and persecute Him? Sometimes He asked them questions in order to convince them by their own answers; at other times He answers their questions, although He knew that they put them only to try Him. We do not read of any of them being converted thereby. He knew well that so it was to be; but to give us an example, He would preach to those who He knew never would be converted or profit by His preaching, but perhaps be the worse for it, to teach us, who do not know whether those whom we address will be converted or not, not to give over preaching and hearing confessions and doing what rests with us, without being discouraged at not seeing or hearing of any immediate fruit. Perhaps some soul is predestined to be converted by means of this preaching, and the Lord will touch his heart by means of this your talk or sermon; and though at present it seems to you that they are not being converted or improved, possibly they will be converted afterwards, and that seed of the word of God which fell in their heart will afterwards germinate, as not unfrequently happens. Thus we should never leave off doing what it rests with us to do for the help of our neighbor.

Gerson, in a treatise which he wrote "On Drawing Little Ones to Christ," speaks well on this point against those who lose courage and have no heart to deal with a certain class of people and hear their confessions because they think that they do not persevere, but go back at once to

their sins, and that labor spent on them is time wasted, like throwing goods into a rotten sack. Gerson there animates and exhorts confessors to apply themselves to hearing boys' confessions, and says that great good may be done thereby; because these boys are at a parting of the waters, between two ways, and will follow that course on which they shall be set, and take his side who first gets hold of them. If they are first got hold of on the part of the devil and the world, they will go that way; and in like manner if they are got hold of on the part of God. Thus it is very important to show them the way of virtue and start them well on it at the outset, because in that way they will remain. And he answers the objection and excuse of those who refuse to hear these young folk's confessions, saying it is lost time and labor thrown away upon them because they have no capacity to understand what is said to them, and as soon as their confession is done, at once they go back to their old ways, frolicking and fighting with one another as if you had said nothing to them at all. Gerson goes on to say: If you refuse to hear their confessions because they go back at once to their old pranks and evil ways, at that rate you should not hear the confessions of grown-up people either, for they also, as soon as their confession is over, go back to their vomit and to sins very different from those that boys are apt to commit, for they often do not amount to mortal sins, and those others do. A fine thing, forsooth, it would be, if we cast off our penitents and ceased to hear their confessions because they straightway relapsed into the same sins! Not on that account, says Gerson, are we to leave off hearing confessions either of grown-up or little folk, in so far as they have a real purpose not to return to their sins. He brings two good comparisons to illustrate this. When a ship is leaking, does the man at the pump cease pumping because as much water keeps coming in as goes out? Nor again do we give over washing our hands, though they must presently get dirty again. We must

keep to the pump, though we see that the water comes in as fast as it goes out; otherwise the ship would founder, whereas, as it is, it does not founder. We must wash our hands time after time, though they are sure quickly to get dirty again, lest otherwise the dirt might settle on them, and then be difficult to get off. In like manner we must not leave off hearing confessions and helping penitents, however clearly we foresee their straightway returning to the same sins; for if we gave them up, they would go all lengths to perdition; while, as it is, they hold back and do not give such full rein to their vices as they otherwise would do—and in the end, when all is said and done, there is hope of their salvation.

We read a very good precedent for this in the Life of our blessed Father Ignatius. Among other holy works in which he occupied himself, he engaged in the conversion of women of evil life. He got set up in Rome a new house for such as wished to leave off their shameful and wretched life. There was in the city a monastery of penitents, but they received there only such as wished to enter as nuns; and many of these poor women, though they desired to rise from their unhappy state, did not feel in themselves strength for such perfection; while others, being married, could not though they wished. To the end, therefore, that the one and the other might find a place of retreat, he caused a house to be opened for them under the name of the Monastery of St. Martha. And because nobody would begin so holy a work, though many offered to contribute to it, our holy Father began it himself out of his poverty with a hundred ducats, which he got for some jewels that he bade his procurator sell, though at the time he was in great want for the needs of the Society. His office of General hindered him not from taking this work so much to heart that, when there were any that wished to change their life, he himself accompanied them through the streets of Rome and conducted them to this Monastery of St.

Martha, or to some other decent home where he collected them. Some took upon themselves to tell him that he was losing his time in laboring to convert such creatures as these, who, as they were hardened in vice, would easily fall back into their former disorders. But he answered: "I do not count this labor lost; rather I say that if with all the labors and cares of a lifetime I could make sure of one of these women passing one single night without sin, I would take all my pains as well spent at that price, that the majesty of my Creator and Lord should not be offended for that short time, though I knew for certain that after that she would go back to her foul and wretched ways." Thus, though we knew for certain that our penitents were to return at once to their sins, we should count the labor of our whole life well employed to secure their going one hour at least without sin, or avoiding one mortal sin. This is true zeal for the honor and glory of God. He who digs in search of treasure first throws up much earth, and reckons all that labor well spent to find a little gold.

But let us go farther and put the case that no one is converted, nor leaves off his sin even for an hour; still, I say, we ought not to leave off preaching and doing whatsoever depends upon us for the help of souls. St. Bernard in a letter to Pope Eugenius III, who had been a monk and disciple of his, exhorts him to reform the people and court of Rome; and, having dwelt at length on that topic, he goes on: "But perhaps you will laugh at me, and tell me that you have broken off finally with the Roman people, a forward and proud sort, lovers of tumults, wars, and dissensions, an intractable and untameable lot, who can never be at peace or subject to anyone except when they have no power to resist; a people from whom no good is to be expected, and to labor for whom is to labor in vain." The saint gives this marvelous reply: "Do not lose heart; care, not cure, is what is asked of you. *You have been established for their governor*, says the Wise Man; *take care of*

them (Eccles. xxxii. 1-2). And take notice that he says not, 'Cure them.' The superior is not bound to find an effectual cure and remedy for the faults of his subjects; it does not rest with him to do so. The verse says well: *Non est in medico semper relevetur ut aeger*—"The patient's recovery does not rest always with the physician." A man's being a good physician, and doing well what belongs to his office, does not depend on that.

But let us leave alone, says St. Bernard, the witness of externs, since we have better witness of our own. The Apostle St. Paul says: *I have labored more than all* (I Cor. xv. 10). He does not say: "I have produced more fruit than all," because he knew well, as he had been taught by God, that *everyone shall receive reward and recompense according to his labor* (I Cor. iii. 8), not according to the success and fruit that he has gained; and therefore the Apostle glories in his labors, and not in the fruit thereof. And so he says elsewhere: *I have seen myself in more labors than them* (II Cor. xi. 23). Do, then, what belongs to your part; plant, water, labor, and cultivate the vineyard of the Lord, and thereby you will have accomplished all that can be laid to your charge. The increase and fruit does not stand to your account. The Lord will give it when He pleases; and if, perchance, He is not pleased to give it, you will lose nothing by that, since the Scripture says: *The Lord will give the just the reward of their labors* (Wisdom x. 17); for God pays and gives the reward and recompense to each according to his works and labors, and not according to the success and fruit that follows from them. O happy and secure labor, the reward of which is not diminished or impaired by any issue that befalls! Though there be no fruit, though nobody be converted or amended, you shall have your reward as full and complete as though there had been numbers of conversions and great fruit gained.

This be said, says St. Bernard, without prejudice to the goodness and omnipotence of God, because, however hard-

ened the heart of the people, *God can make out of stones, and hearts as hard as stone, children of Abraham* (Matt. iii. 9). And who knows but that He will do it? *Who knoweth but that God will turn those eyes of mercy, and forgive, and leave us his blessing?* (Joel ii. 14). But, says the saint, I am not dealing now with what God is to do, for it does not become us to scrutinize His high judgments; what I am aiming at is to persuade those whose office it is to come to their neighbor's aid, not to fail to do all that they can in this respect under the idea that they are doing no good, since our merit and reward do not depend on that, but on doing our duty in our office, and doing it with all due diligence and care.

And besides, for two other reasons it greatly befits us, though there be nobody to convert and no fruit to be produced, none the less to persevere and not cease to preach and labor and do all that is in our power for the help of our neighbor, just as though there were many conversions and much improvement effected. In the first place, this befits the mercy and greatness of God. St. Chrysostom says: Fountains do not cease to run though none come to draw the water; it is part of the greatness of a city that the water should overflow and be spilled and lost for its abundance. In like manner preachers, through whom the water of Gospel teaching has to flow, must not give over preaching and shedding the word of God, whether men come many or few to draw this water. This is the magnificence and greatness of the goodness and mercy of God, that there is such abundance of doctrine in the Church that its fountains are ever welling forth and running for anyone who is thirsty and desires to drink. *All ye who are thirsty, come to the waters and drink; and ye who have no money, hasten to buy and eat: come and buy without money and without any exchange wine and milk* (Isaias lv. 1).

In the second place, this befits also the justice of God; for if men are not amended and converted by so many warn-

ings, talks, and sermons, at least it will serve further to justify God's cause; *that thou mayest be justified in thy words, and mayest overcome when thou art judged* (Psalm l. 6), coming out victorious over the accusations of men. God wishes fully to justify His cause with men, that they may see that their condemnation rests not with Him, but with themselves, so that they have left no excuse nor ground of complaint but of themselves, seeing the many means and helps that they had. And even when they would not come to hear the sermon, preachers went out to preach in the streets. So God addresses Himself to giving reason and satisfaction to His people, alleging what He has done for them, saying by Isaias (v. 4): *What more could I have done for my vineyard, and have not done it? I planted it, I walled it in, I built a tower in the midst of it for its defense, and instead of grapes, that I looked for from it, it hath given me wild berries. Judge ye, then, between me and my vineyard,* and see whose fault it is that it fails to bear fruit. It is not a little but a great thing that you should serve to take God's part and to justify His cause with sinners at the day of judgment. Your sermons and admonitions will accuse, convict, and condemn the wicked, so that they shall not have a word to say.

Thus any way we take the thing, it befits us never to cease doing all that is in our power in aid of our neighbor, whether he be converted and improved or not. St. Augustine on that parable of the guests, speaking of the servant who by order of his lord went out to invite them to supper, and some of them refused to come, writes very well: "Think you that that servant will be reckoned among the slothful because those people would not come to the supper? No, certainly not; he shall be reckoned among the diligent and careful because he has done what he was commanded. He invited them, he asked them, and did what was in his power to get them to come to supper. They refused to come; they shall be the persons punished, while the servant shall only

be rewarded for his ready diligence as fully as if they had all come." What God will ask us as part of our account is if we have done all that we could and ought for the improvement of our neighbor. That the said neighbor should actually have been improved is a good thing, a thing we should all desire and greatly rejoice at, as we read in the holy Gospel (Luke x. 21) that Christ our Redeemer rejoiced in spirit when the apostles had been to preach and had gathered great fruit. But, after all, that does not go to our account, but to someone else's. Everyone will have to give to God an account of what regards himself: the question we shall be asked will be whether we have done our duty well in all that it was in our power to do for the improvement of our neighbor; and our neighbor will give an account, and a very strict one, of how he benefited thereby.

Thus our merit and the perfection of our work do not depend on our neighbor's benefiting by it or not. We add another thing for our consolation—or rather, to console us in our desolation; it is that not only our merit, reward, and recompense do not depend on our neighbor's being converted and much good done, but in some sort we may say that we do more and merit more when nothing comes of it than when there is visible fruit. In the same way, speaking of prayer, we are wont to say that he does more who keeps to his prayer, having no devotion, but only distraction and dryness, than he who prays with devotion and consolation. For a preacher to see that he has a great hearing, and is followed by a crowd, and that there are many conversions on occasion of his sermons, is a very great gratification and comfort, so encouraging that he feels not the labor, as St. Gregory observes. On the contrary, to see that there is no improvement in the audience, and no good done, is in itself very disheartening and a great grief. For a preacher not to have his wings broken by such a come-down, but to go on with his work as if all the world were listening to him and benefiting, is a thing of high perfection, and shows well that what he does is done purely for God.

With this purity and perfection, then, we should manage to do our ministries, not setting our eyes chiefly on the fruit and good success of our works, but on doing in them the will of God, and on doing them with the greatest perfection we can to please God, for that is what His Divine Majesty asks and requires of us. And in this way the labor will be no obstacle to us, nor will the little fruit or the ill success discourage us, nor trouble us, nor rob us of our peace and contentment, as is apt to befall those who fix their eyes on the fruit and good success of their work.

Holy Scripture relates that Anna, wife of Elcana, felt very sad and disconsolate at not having children. Her husband, who cherished her greatly, said to her: *Anna, why weepest thou and art so afflicted? Is it not enough for thee that thou hast me? Am I not better to thee than ten children?* (I Kings i. 8). So we may say to these persons: Be not sad or disheartened; suffice it for you to cling to God, suffice it for you to give satisfaction to God, for that is worth more than the having of many spiritual children. This will be a great source of comfort in all labors.

EIGHTEENTH TREATISE

ON THE VOWS OF RELIGION



CHAPTER I

That the Perfection of a Religious Consists in the Perfect Observance of the Three Vows That He Makes of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience

BEFORE we come to speak in particular of each of these vows, we will make some observations on them in general. Let this be the first, that these three vows are the principal means which religious life offers for the attainment of perfection. St. Thomas says that a religious is in a state of perfection; and such is the common doctrine of the doctors and saints, taken from St. Denis the Areopagite. They do not mean to say that, being a religious, a man is at once perfect, says the glorious St. Thomas, but that he professes to travel on the road to perfection. *Non quasi profitentes se ipsos perfectos, sed profitentes se ad perfectionem tendere.* The religious does not profess to be already perfect, as the bishop professes, because the state of episcopacy requires perfection going before; but for the religious state it is not necessary that it should go before—it is enough if it comes after. St. Thomas well gathers this difference between the episcopal and the religious state from the words of Christ our Redeemer in the Gospel. In giving the counsel of voluntary poverty, which the religious professes, He does not suppose the person to whom He gives it to be perfect, but that he will be perfect if he observes those counsels. He did not say: *If thou art perfect, go sell what thou hast*, but: *If thou wilt be perfect* (Matt. xix. 21). But to make St. Peter a prelate, He asks him not only if he loves Him, but if he loves Him more than the rest do, and that not only once, but a second and third time, to give us to understand the great charity and perfection that is required for such an office. Thus both the episcopal state and the religious state are states of perfection, but in different ways; for the former presupposes perfec-

tion, and does not give it; while the religious state does not suppose perfection, but gives it. You are not bound at once to be perfect on being a religious, but you are bound to aspire after perfection, and make it your business and try for it. They allege for this that saying of St. Jerome: *Monachum perfectum in patria sua esse non posse, perfectum autem esse nolle delinquere est*—"A religious cannot be perfect, living at home in his native place"—a religious very fond of his native place and much attached to his relations is not taking the right road to perfection—"and not to seek perfection, or try for it, or aim at it, is a breach of duty in him," since he fails in what is due and obligatory in his state. And St. Eusebius of Ernessa says: "It is a great thing to enter religion; but he who after entering upon this state does not aim at perfection, runs great danger and risk of incurring damnation." And so St. Thomas says that a religious who makes no effort to attain perfection, nor concerns himself about it, is a mockery in religion, since he does not aim at nor try for that which he professes and for which he came into religion. Our life must be in agreement with the name that we bear.

Now the chief means that religion offers for the attainment of perfection are the three essential vows that we make of poverty, chastity, and obedience. St. Thomas explains this very well. The religious state, he says, may be considered in three ways. First, as it is an exercise of traveling to perfection; and for that it is necessary to get rid of those things that might hinder and hold back the heart from being wholly taken up with the love of God, in which perfection consists. These things are mainly three. The first is the coveting of exterior goods, and that obstacle is got rid of by the vow of poverty; the second is the craving after sensual pleasures, and that obstacle is got rid of by the vow of chastity; the third is the disorder of our will, and that is removed by the vow of obedience.

Secondly, the religious state may be considered as a state of great quiet and freedom from the things of the world, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *I would have you be without anxiety* (I Cor. vii. 32). This is very well secured by the three vows, since this anxiety and restlessness proceed chiefly from three things: property, which is removed by the vow of poverty; management of children and household, which is removed by the vow of chastity; disposal of one's self, of one's own acts and occupations—for example, "What shall I do to fill up my time? What office or place will suit me?"—and that care is removed by the vow of obedience, whereby a man puts himself in the hands of his superior, who holds the place of God, to do with him what he sees fit.

Thirdly, the religious state may be considered as a holocaust, whereby a man offers himself and all his belongings entirely to God. This he does completely by the three vows, because all that we hold here on earth is reducible to three heads—exterior goods of property and riches, and these we renounce and offer to God by the vow of poverty; bodily goods and pleasures, and these we renounce and offer by the vow of chastity; interior goods of the soul, and these we offer by the vow of obedience, whereby we renounce our will and understanding, handing them over and subjecting them to the superior in place of God. Thus, whatever way we look at it, we shall find that these three vows which we offer to God are the chief means that religion supplies for the attainment of perfection.

It is related in the chronicles of the Friars Minor that Christ our Redeemer once appeared to St. Francis and bade him make Him three offerings. "Thou knowest, O Lord," answered the saint, "that I have already offered Thee all that I have, and that I am all Thine, and that I have nothing left in the world but this habit and cord, which are Thine also. What, therefore, can I offer to Thine Infinite Majesty? I would I had another heart and another

soul to offer Thee. But since Thou biddest me make an offering, give it me, O Lord, that therewith I may serve and obey Thee." The Lord said to him: "Put thy hand into thy bosom and offer Me what thou findest." He did so, and found in his bosom a piece of gold so large and beautiful that he had never seen the like. He stretched out his arm at once, and offered it to the Lord. He was bidden do the same a second and a third time; and each time he drew out another piece of gold and offered it. And the Lord told him that these three offerings signified golden obedience, precious poverty, and fair chastity. These things, says the saint, the Lord has given me the grace of offering to Him so perfectly that my conscience reproaches me on no point of the observance of them. Oh, that we could offer to God these three vows in such sort that our conscience should reproach us on no point of the observance of them! Oh, that we could say, not with St. Francis alone, but with holy Job: *Mine heart hath not reproached nor rebuked me in the whole course of my life* (Job xxvii. 6).

CHAPTER II

Why These Things Are Done and Confirmed Under Vow

BUT someone will say: Why is this done under vow, since poverty, chastity, and obedience may be observed without vows? To which St. Thomas and all theologians very well reply that it was necessary in religion that this should be done under vows, because vows are the essence of religious life, and of them it comes to be a state of perfection; and without them religion would not be religion, nor a state of perfection. The reason of this is that for a state of perfection there is required a perpetual obligation to the things of perfection; since a *state* means of itself something stable, firm, and permanent, as we speak of the *state* of matrimony and the perpetual tie that it carries with it.

So, also, for a man to be in a state of perfection, there is needed a perpetual tie and obligation to perfection, and that is made by the vows of religion. St. Thomas says this is the difference between parish priests and bishops, whereby the latter are in a state of perfection, and the former are not; because parish priests are not bound to the care of souls by vow and perpetual obligation—they can resign it when they like; but bishops are in a state of perfection because they are under a perpetual obligation to the pastoral office, which they cannot resign without leave and authorization of the pope. This is also the difference between the perfection of a man in the world and that of a religious; for, though it may well be that there in the world a man may be more perfect than a religious, nevertheless he is not in a state of perfection, and the religious is. The perfection of the man in the world is not confirmed by vows like that of the religious, and so has not that firmness and stability in good which the religious has by reason of his state. Today he is chaste and well-purposed, and tomorrow he goes back; but the religious, though he is not perfect, is in a state of perfection, being tied and bound to it by vows of things that belong to perfection, and for him there is no going back. Hence the answer of a holy man [Brother Giles] on being asked whether it was possible to obtain the grace of God and perfection while remaining in the world. He answered: "Yes, it is possible; but I would rather have one degree of the grace of God in religion than ten in the world." And the reason is that in religion grace is easily preserved and increased, as therein man lives apart from the tumult and perturbation of the world, the deadly enemy of grace, and is helped and spurred on to virtue and perfection by the example of his spiritual brethren, and has many other things to help him thereto; but quite the contrary is found in the world, and so the grace which one has there in that secular life is easily lost and with difficulty maintained. Hence we may

infer, said that holy man, that it is better to have less grace, secured and safeguarded by the many supports that foster it in religion, than a much higher degree with the evident danger that there is in the world.

Hence will be readily understood the temptation of certain novices, who fancy that there in the world they will keep up their meditation and recollection as they do here, and will lead a very edifying life. The devil is deceiving them, trying to get them to give up what they have and entice them out of religion. There in the world an ex-novice will begin by being very devout, going to confession every week, making meditation, avoiding occasions dangerous to chastity. But as he remains his own master and is not under any perpetual obligation, and many lets and hindrances get in his way, it comes to be that one morning he omits his meditation, another day his confession, another day he engages in a distracting conversation, and another day he loses everything. We have daily experience of this. But a religious cannot leave these things out, nor go back upon his profession and the state in which his vows have placed him. His vows are that triple cord of which the Holy Ghost says: *A triple cord is hardly broken* (Eccles. iv. 12). That is hardly broken or untied which is fastened and tied with these three cords.

It is these three vows, then, that make our mode of life a religious life and a state of perfection. The saints say that the apostles, taught by Christ, made a beginning in themselves, and laid these foundations of religious life, offering themselves to Christ our Lord by vow, when they left all things to follow Him (St. Thomas 2a—2æ, p. 88, art. 4, ad 3). So it is by apostolic tradition, derived from Christ, that the usage obtains in the Catholic Church of religious' dedicating themselves to God by these three vows.

CHAPTER III

Of Other Great Benefits and Advantages That the Obligation of the Vows Carries with It

BESIDES what has been mentioned, the vows carry another great utility and profit, which is that what is done under vow is much more praiseworthy and of greater value and merit before God, than what is done voluntarily without vow. For this St. Thomas assigns three excellent reasons. The first is because a vow is an act of religion, which is the greatest and most excellent of all moral virtues; and so it gives a stamp of superior excellence to the other virtues, making them works of religion, a sacred thing, an act of divine worship, a sacrifice and thing now dedicated and promised to God. Thus fasting, which is an act of temperance, is made also an act of religion, and so becomes a meritorious work in two ways, by virtue of the act of fasting in itself and by its being an act of religion. And generally in all that we do under obedience we gain a double merit, one that of the act itself, the other the merit of obedience. Thus our works are more meritorious than they would be if done of our own will, away from obedience and without vow. This will be better understood by the contrary. When a man sins against a vow of chastity, he commits two sins, one against chastity and the Sixth Commandment; the other, and the greater sin, of sacrilege against the vow that he has made; so also when a man keeps his vow of chastity, he gains two merits, one of the virtue of chastity and observance of the Sixth Commandment; the other, and a greater merit, that of fulfilling the vow which he has made to God, which is an act of the virtue of religion. And so of the other vows.

The second reason why it is more meritorious is because he who does a thing under vow does more, and gives and offers more to God, than another who does it without vow,

because he not only gives what he does, but gives also his inability to do otherwise, which is much more; he offers to God his liberty, which is the greatest thing that he can offer. An excellent thing it is to leave all for Christ; but by the vow of poverty a man not only leaves the property which he has, but also the very power of keeping it, which is much more. He gives the tree along with the fruit, an excellent comparison used by St. Thomas and St. Anselm to explain this. As he does more and gives more, he says, who presents another with the tree itself along with all its fruit, than he who gathers the fruit and sends it, keeping the tree; so the religious gives to God the tree along with the fruit; while people living in the world at most give to God the fruit of the tree, that is, sundry good works, but they do not offer Him the tree, which is themselves: they keep that; they remain their own. But the religious offers also his very self, tree and fruit, work, desire, and liberty; he gives all to God, he is now no longer his own. For the religious there is nothing left more for him to give; he has given all. St. Bonaventure brings another comparison. He says that, as he gives more who gives not only the use of a thing, but the ownership as well, so the religious, who offers himself to God by vows, gives more and makes a greater sacrifice of himself because he gives not only his works, but also his will and his liberty of doing otherwise; he delivers himself over to God, use and dominion alike.

The third reason why what is done under vow is of greater merit than what is done without vow is because the goodness of exterior works springs chiefly from the will; and the better the will, the better also are the works that proceed from it. But it is clear that the firmer, steadier, and more lasting the good will is, the better it will be, because it will be so much the further from falling into that defect which the Wise Man notes: *The sluggard willeth and willeth not* (Prov. xiii. 4). Even the pagan philosopher,

Aristotle, sets it down as one of the conditions of virtue that the act be done firmly and steadily. Now this is what the vow does; it gives firmness and steadiness to the good work, and so renders it more perfect. Contrariwise, theologians say that he who is obstinate in sin sins more grievously than another who sins by weakness or overpowered by a sudden fit of passion, because his will is more rooted and fixed in evil, and this they call sin against the Holy Ghost (Matt. xii. 32). So, then, to do a good work with a very firm will, and a will fixed and resolute in good, makes an action very perfect and meritorious.

Furthermore, if we consider on the one hand our own weakness, and on the other the virulence and pertinacity of the devil in tempting us, it appears that no expedient could be found more to the purpose, as well for strengthening our weakness as for closing the gate against the devil, than binding ourselves to God by these vows. As one who is soliciting the hand of a rich lady loses his hopes, and there is an end to his solicitations, when he sees her married to another; so, when the devil sees that a soul has now espoused herself to God by means of these vows, he loses his hopes of bringing her round again to the things of this world, and often on that account he ceases to tempt her, because he fears that such temptation will serve only to augment her crown, and that he will lose where he thought to gain.

CHAPTER IV

Why the Surrender That One Makes of Oneself to Religion by These Three Vows Is Called by the Saints a Second Baptism and a Martyrdom

OF so great value and merit before God is the entire surrender of oneself to God by these three vows of religion that theologians and saints say that thereby one gains

remission of all one's sins, so that, were you to die then, you would go straight to heaven without passing through purgatory, like one dying immediately after receiving baptism (St. Thomas 2a—2æ, q. ult. art. 3, ad 3). And so St. Jerome, St. Cyprian, and St. Bernard call it a second baptism. And this does not happen by way of indulgences. As for plenary indulgences, novices gain one the first day they are received and are given the habit of religion, on condition of confession and Communion. But what I speak of happens not merely by virtue of an indulgence, but by virtue of the act itself being so excellent and heroic that, of itself and without any indulgence, it makes satisfaction for all the penalty due to one's sins. Doctors quote in support of this what is read in the Life of St. Anthony. It appeared to the saint in a vision that the angels were carrying him up to heaven, and the devils came forth to get in his way and tried to bar his going up, accusing him of some sins that he had committed in the world. The angels answered: "If you have anything to accuse him of since he has been a religious, accuse him of that; but as for the sins that he committed in the world, they are already pardoned and atoned for; that account was wiped out on the day that he became a religious." Whereupon the devils were dumb-founded.

The Prophet Daniel said to King Nabuchodonosor: *Redeem thy sins by almsdeeds* (Dan. iv. 24). But if to give alms out of part of one's substance is such a satisfaction to God for one's sins, how much greater satisfaction will he make who gives all! It is more to give all and leave all than to give only a part. A good thing it is, a very good thing, when a man of property shares it with the poor; but much better is his act who leaves all to follow Christ. St. Jerome, writing against the heretic, Vigilantius, very well proves this to be the better course by the testimony of Christ Himself uttered in the holy Gospel: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the*

poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come follow me (Matt. xix. 21). It is, therefore, the more perfect thing to leave all by one act and follow Christ. St. Gregory on Ezechiel, quoted by St. Thomas, says that persons in the world, who keep their property in their own hands and share it with the poor, offer to God a *sacrifice* of their property because they give something to God while keeping something for themselves; but the religious, who keeps nothing for himself, but renounces all for love of God, offers to God a *holocaust*, which is more than a sacrifice. What, then, must it be to leave for God not only all one's property, but also oneself—one's body by the vow of chastity, and one's will and understanding by the vow of obedience! What must it be to live ever denying and mortifying oneself for love of God! For that is the life of a religious: *Ever carrying about, imprinted on our body, the mortification of Jesus* (II Cor. iv. 10). The excellence and perfection of this deed is well seen by the fact that, though one has made a vow to go to Rome and Jerusalem, and give all one's property and acquisitions to the poor, and serve in the hospitals all one's life, and take the discipline every day, and fast on bread and water, and go about wearing a hair shirt, and anything further that you like to mention, he has only to enter religion, and all those obligations cease and are commuted into that, as being a better thing, more pleasing to God, and a thing of greater perfection. So it is laid down in the canon law, and all doctors hold it.

Finally, so great and heroic is this act of dedicating oneself and surrendering oneself entirely to God by the three vows, that the saints compare the religious state to martyrdom, and say that such is the life of a religious, and that not a short struggle like that of the martyrs, but continual and prolonged. St. Bernard says: "It does not look so horrible as the martyrdom of rack and knife, of grid-iron and fire; but in point of duration it is much more irksome and painful." The martyrdom of the martyrs of old

was done with one stroke of the sword, and all was over; but the martyrdom of a religious is not done at a stroke, but always and every day they are to go about martyring you, mortifying you in honor and reputation, and doing violence to your self-will and judgment, according to the saying of the prophet: *For thee, O Lord, we are mortified all day long, and treated as sheep for the slaughter* (Psalm xliii. 22). We have to be ready for everything, exposed like sheep at the shambles. As the martyrs did not themselves choose at their will the torment and kind of death to be inflicted on them, but were ready to receive any that was given, so a religious should be like a martyr, disposed and on the lookout for every sort of mortification.

As, then, by martyrdom (so saints and councils say) a martyr gains the remission of all his sins, and goes straight to heaven without passing through purgatory—and it would be an insult to a martyr to pray for him, martyrdom being so heroic and excellent a work that, as Christ our Redeemer says: *Greater love no man hath than to give his life for his friend* (John xv. 13), because he has nothing more to give—so also by this offering whereby a man dedicates himself to God in religion by perpetual vows, being a work so excellent and heroic that thereby one gives all that one can give and has nothing more left to give, the taker of such vows has remitted to him the penalty of all his sins, and remains as he was just after baptism, or would have been, had he suffered martyrdom. And therefore the saints compare it to baptism and martyrdom, because in this respect they agree.

CHAPTER V

*That Liberty Is Not Given Up or Diminished by Vows,
but Rather Is Perfected*

BUT someone will say: I quite see that the giving up of oneself to God by these vows is attended by all these blessings and advantages; but, after all, it seems that the man who takes vows loses his liberty, and deprives himself of what is so great a good that, as the poet says: "It is not to be purchased or compensated for by gold"—*Non bene pro toto libertas venditur auro*. To this St. Thomas gives a very good answer. He says: You are mistaken; liberty is not given up by vows, but rather is perfected. And he enlarges on this point very well, showing that the effect of vows is to confirm and fix the will in good, so that it may be further removed from falling away; and this does not abolish, but rather perfects liberty in its own fashion. Thus in God and in the blessed in heaven their being unable to sin does not deprive them of liberty, but rather they possess it in the highest degree. And the apostles, who were confirmed in grace and could not sin mortally, did not lose their liberty by that, but rather it was perfected thereby, since it was confirmed and fixed more surely in the good for which it was created. And this is what our Father says in the Letter on Obedience: "Think it no little profit to your free will that you are able by obedience to give it back entirely to Him Who gave it, whereby you do not lose it, but perfect it, conforming your will entirely to that most sure rule of all rectitude, which is the divine will, the interpreter whereof is the superior who governs you in God's stead."

This is well borne out by what St. Anselm says: "The power of sinning, and the power of making ill use of your liberty, is not a perfection, but an imperfection and misery; not a power, but weakness and infirmity"—*Peccare non est*

subjects himself under obedience than he who does not dare to do so. Let us take an example from the vow of chastity. The reason why you make a vow of chastity is because you think that you shall be master of yourself, by the grace of God, sufficiently to observe chastity; and, the reason why your friend in the world does not dare to do that, is because he thinks he shall not be master of himself to that extent. You see how you who make the vow are the one who has the more mastery over himself to do what he wishes, and what he sees is the right thing to do. But it is in this that liberty consists; the state of the other is not liberty, but subjection and servitude; he is not master, but the slave of his appetite and sensuality, which drags him and twists him about and makes him sin. This is what Holy Writ so often repeats: *I see in my members a law taking me captive to the law of sin. A man is the slave and captive of that which overcometh him. Whoever committeth sin, is the slave of sin* (Rom. vii. 23; II Pet. ii. 19; John viii. 34). It is the same with obedience. The reason why you put yourself under obedience by vow is because you trust, by the grace of God, that you shall be master of yourself sufficiently to follow the will of your superior and deny your own. Your friend does not feel master of himself to the extent of trusting his competence to bring himself to deny his own will, and go always by the will of another in the path of obedience, and therefore he is minded to stay in his own house, and has not the courage to enter religion and make a vow of obedience. Thus the putting of oneself under obedience and taking these vows is a sign of greater liberty and being more master of oneself. It is a noble and generous subjection, and to it the Wise Man counsels and exhorts us: *Put thy feet into her fetters and thy neck into her collar; bow down thy shoulder and bear her, and be not weary of her bonds* (Ecclus. vi. 25-26). O happy fetters, happy chains! which Holy Writ calls not *chains*, but a *collar*—*And thy neck into her collar*. These chains do not

throttle the neck, but adorn it; for they are not chains of iron, but of gold; they are not chains of slaves, but of lords. They are collars of gold, that put no weight on them that wear them, but honor and dignity. It is very important to take these things, and things like them, in this way, because so taken they make the yoke of Christ sweet, as St. Ambrose observes. And the yoke of Christ is sweet if you take it as an ornament, and not as a burden.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Great Blessings That There Are in Religion, and the Gratitude That We Owe to God for Having Called Us to It

GOD is faithful, by whom ye are called to the society of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (I Cor. i. 9). One of the things that God enjoined upon the children of Israel when He led them out of the captivity of Egypt, was that they should remember the day on which so great a favor had been done them. And He enforced this injunction by ordering that every year they should celebrate a Pass-over to last eight days, with great solemnity, eating therein with great ceremonies a lamb in memory of that which was slain when they were delivered from captivity. If God ordered this in memory of the bodily deliverance, of which they did not make good use after they had received it, what will it be reasonable for us to do in memory of the day on which His almighty and loving hand drew us out of the captivity which our soul was in, and set us on the way of the Land of Promise, not of earth, but of heaven? So we read of the holy Abbot Arsenius that every year he celebrated the day on which the Lord had done him so great a favor as this drawing him out of the world. And the festive celebration that he made was to receive Communion that day, to give alms to three poor men, to eat some cooked

vegetable, and to keep open house in his cell for all the monks to come in.

The blessed St. Augustine explains to this purpose what Moses said to Pharaoh when he wished the children of Israel to sacrifice to God in Egypt, and not go beyond its bounds to offer sacrifice. Moses said: "*That cannot be, for we should have to sacrifice to the Lord our God the abominations of the Egyptians* (Exod. viii. 26)—the cow, the calf, the lamb, which the Egyptians adore as gods; and it would be an abomination to them if they saw us killing and cutting the throats of the creatures they adore, and they would eschew us as blasphemers. We must needs go out of Egypt and come into the desert, to be able to sacrifice these things to God with impunity." So we have to sacrifice and offer to God our Lord what men of the world abhor and abominate—poverty, mortification of the flesh, obedience and subjection, being put down and despised, denying and breaking our own will. We could not sacrifice and offer these things to God in the world, which would hiss us and banish us and not suffer us to live, for people of the world abominate that sort of thing, and make game of the poor and lowly and humble. *We will go a three days' journey into the desert and there sacrifice to our God* (Exod. viii. 27). God of His infinite goodness and mercy has done us this favor of drawing us out of Egypt and bringing us into the desert of religion, where we are able with these three vows to offer and sacrifice to our God all these things with impunity, for here it is a great honor and great glory to do so, and he who distinguishes himself and is most eminent herein is most regarded and esteemed.

For the better understanding of the obligation under which we lie of paying our acknowledgments and thanks to the Lord for this favor and benefit, we will briefly set down here some of the good and excellent things by which the saints declare its greatness. The glorious St. Jerome on that passage of the Eightieth Psalm: *When the people went*

out of the land of Egypt, they heard a language which they knew not: the Lord delivered his men from their burdens (Psalm lxxx. 6-7), enlarges on the great favor that God has done us in drawing us out of Egypt, that is, the world; he sets before us the captivity and servitude of Pharaoh in which we were, and the liberty of the sons of God to which we have been called. God has drawn us out, he says, and delivered us from a heavy yoke and burden. We were servants and slaves of Pharaoh there in the world; and God's strong and mighty hand has drawn us out of that servitude and subjection. When we were in Egypt, there in the world, we were building the cities of Pharaoh: all our work was to make bricks and be busy on constructions of clay and mud; all our time was taken up and all our care and diligence in looking for straw, straw that the wind carries away, straw to make bricks. We had no wheat; it was all straw. We had not that heavenly bread which comes from above. What a heavy load we had to carry uphill! What cares, what labors we had, all to get enough to eat, or at most to get some honorable office! And to uphold and carry that on, what difficulties there were, what applications to make to men in power, what formalities to observe, what compliments to pay, what laws of society to observe!—the stringency of which they alone understand who come under them. Truly it is a yoke of iron and heaviness that people of the world have to bear, struggling uphill. But God has taken off from our shoulders the heavy yoke of the laws and obligations and codes of the world. *Divertit ab oneribus dorsum eius*—"He hath taken the weight off his back" (Psalm lxxx. 7); and instead of this yoke of iron, He has put upon us a *burden that is very light, and a yoke that is very sweet* (Matt. xi. 30). God has brought us to a state where all our occupation is to be to love Him and serve Him.

The Apostle St. Paul says of those who are there in the world in the married state: *He that is married is solicitous*

about the things of the world, how to please his wife, and his heart is divided (I Cor. vii. 32). Married folk are embarrassed with many cares; they have to meet liabilities for things of the world, for their property and family. The husband has to try and please his wife, and the wife her husband; they are taken up here and there and divided, and cannot give themselves wholly to God. *But he who liveth without wife is solicitous for the things of the Lord, how to please God. The unmarried woman and the virgin hath her mind on the things of the Lord, how to come to be holy in body and soul* (I Cor. vii. 33-34). He who is in the state of chastity devotes all his care how to please the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But if St. Paul says of him who is in the state of chastity there in the world that all his care has to be how to please the Lord and how to be holy in body and in spirit, what shall it be with religious, whom God has discharged and released from all the cares of the world, even from those necessary for their own support, that we may devote all our care to the matter of pleasing God more and being holier every day!

St. Augustine says that this is signified by the sacrifice that Abraham offered to God, which was a cow, a she-goat, a sheep, and further a turtle-dove and a pigeon; the land animals he divided into two halves, but the birds he did not divide, but offered them whole (Gen. xv. 10). By land animals, he says, are signified carnal men and men of the world, who are divided and split up into many parts; but by the turtle-doves and the pigeon, who are tame birds and do no harm to anyone, are signified spiritual and perfect men, whether they be solitaries and live apart from human society—and these are signified by the turtle-dove—or whether they deal and converse with men—and these are signified by the pigeon; these are not cut in twain or divided, but employ their whole selves in serving God entirely.

This, then, is the favor that the Lord has done to reli-

gious, that we offer ourselves to God wholly and entirely in a sacrifice and holocaust; we have no need to divide or portion ourselves out in other cares, but think solely how we may daily please God more and more. For this we make the vow of chastity, that, as the Apostle St. Paul says, having no companion to please nor family to govern, all our occupation and care may be every day to become better and more perfect. For this we make the vow of poverty, whereby we give up all worldly riches, and the desire and care and anxiety that they carry with them, which are the thorns of which Christ our Lord speaks in the holy Gospel (Luke viii. 7, 14), that prick and disturb. St. Ambrose says they are called riches because they divide the heart—*divitiae, quod mentem dividunt*. For this we have the vow of obedience, whereby we abandon ourselves and our own will and judgment, so that now we have no occasion to make plans or have any solicitude for what is to become of us, seeing that our superior, to whom we give ourselves over as holding the place of God, has taken upon himself this solicitude, so that we may be solicitous only for what touches our spiritual progress.

St. Jerome on that word of the psalmist: *Bless and praise the Lord, all ye his servants, who are in his house and dwell in his courts* (Psalm cxxxiii. 1-2), says that, as on earth a temporal lord has many servants who do him service, but makes a difference between them, inasmuch as he keeps some in his house, who are always with him, and others who are always in the country; so God our Lord makes a difference among His servants, some waiting always in His house and in His presence, and others at work in the country. Religious, he says, are the servants who dwell within the Lord's house, and wait ever in His presence and treat with Him every day; they are on the house-staff; but seculars out there in the world are as villagers and farm-servants. And he carries the comparison further. When the servants in the country, the farm-laborers and villagers,

have any business with their master and any request they wish to gain of him, they take for intercessors and mediators the servants who enjoy his familiarity and are ever in waiting upon him and see him and speak to him every day. So worldly people, when they are in any necessity and wish to gain some favor of God, address themselves to religious, that they may commend the matter to God and offer prayer for that necessity, as being the Lord's close favorites, by whose mediation He is likely to grant them their request. Moreover, as it is the servants in the country who labor and plough and dig in order that others may enjoy the produce, being in the palace with their lord, so are worldly persons to religious. They labor and toil and bring in the fruit of their labors, and guard it with much care and solicitude, that religious may eat the same at their ease and leisure.

St. Gregory says that the same is given us to understand in the lives of those two brothers, Jacob and Esau, of whom Holy Scripture says: *Esau was a man skilled in hunting, and a cultivator of land; but Jacob was a simple man, dwelling in tents*, or as another version has it, *at home* (Gen. xxv. 27). By Esau, who went a-hunting and was a farmer, he says are to be understood worldly people, who are occupied and distracted with the exterior things of the world; and by Jacob, a simple man who lived at home, spiritual men and religious, who are always recollected and within themselves, taken up with what concerns their souls, and are the cherished favorites of God, as was Jacob of his mother Rebecca. Let us, then, consider here the great favor that the Lord has done us, Who has privileged us so highly above those of the world that they are like country folk and villagers, while we are like courtiers on the staff of His house. We may well say what the Queen of Saba said when she saw the order and goodly array of the servants of King Solomon: *Blessed are thy subjects, and happy thy servants, who stand before thee at all times and hear thy wisdom* (III Kings x. 8). Happy and blessed are reli-

gious, who are in the house of God and converse frequently with Him and enjoy His wisdom!

Hence we may infer how blind they are who think that they have done much for God in leaving the world and entering religion, and apparently would fain charge God with this, as though they had done something great for Him. You are quite out; it is you who have received a very great favor and benefit from God in His having drawn you out of the world and chosen you for His house in a state so high. You are the debtor, bound to gratitude and fresh service for such a great benefit. If the king were to call any knight to his court to give him a high office, the knight would not think that he was doing anything much in leaving his house and land, or that the king was much obliged to him and greatly in his debt. Rather he would take it that the king was doing him a great favor in deigning to make use of him and naming him to that post; and he would put down to his account that favor atop of the other favors that the king had done him, as an incitement to fresh gratitude and service. That is how we should behave. It is not we that have chosen God, but God that has chosen us (John xv. 16), and has done us this signal favor without merit of ours.

What didst Thou see in us, O Lord, that Thou chosest us rather than our brethren who were there around us? What was there in us that could please Thee? Something Thou didst see, since Thou hast chosen us. Something God saw that pleased Him, since He chose us. But someone will say: "Take care what you are saying, since theologians teach that there is no cause on our side for the predestination of God." The blessed St. Augustine explains this very well by a comparison. A wood carver passing by a mountain sees there the lopped trunk of a tree; he sets his eyes on it and stops. Is he pleased with it? He has a mind to make something of it, for he has not set eyes on it and been pleased with it to leave it there as it is, a rough,

shapeless log; there in his artistic conception he sees what that log is to be. Oh, he says, what a beautiful figure shall be made of that trunk! That is what he loved, that is what pleased him—not what it was then, for it was but a log uncouth and unsightly, but the fair and perfect figure that he was minded to make of it. So, he says, God has loved us, wicked and sinful creatures as we were, not inasmuch as we were sinners, not as we lay, dry logs, unsightly and unprofitable; but the Sovereign Artificer looked upon this lopped trunk by the mountain sides, and thought of what He was to make of that trunk. That is what pleased Him, that is what satisfied Him—not what you were then, for you were but a dry log, shapeless and unsightly, but what He meant to make of you. The Sovereign Artificer, Who made heaven and earth, meant to make of this trunk a highly-wrought and finished figure. *Those whom he foresaw, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son* (Rom. viii. 29), an image like unto God Himself. That is what pleased Him, that is what gave Him satisfaction; for that He has cast eyes on you, for that He chose you. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and I have put you to go, and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain* (John xv. 16). See how like He has wished to make you to His only-begotten Son! He has chosen you for the same office for which His Son came into the world, to gain souls to God.

The same saint has a good discourse to this effect on the first verse of Psalm 136: *On the rivers of Babylon, hard by we sat and wept when we remembered Sion*. He says the rivers of Babylon are the things of this world, frail and perishable, which run and pass away so quick. But there is this difference between the citizens of Babylon and the citizens of Jerusalem, that the former are in the midst of the river of Babylon, plunged in the things of the world, in great storms and dangers; but those who have a mind to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, seeing and consid-

ering the dangers of this river of Babylon, its winds and storms, its waves and fluctuations, its ebbs and flows, get out of it and have no mind to face those dangers, but seat themselves on its banks like the children of Israel. These are religious men who have fled from the dangers of the world, and are seated on the river banks, but weeping and lamenting. What are we weeping and lamenting for? In the first place, he says, we are lamenting our exile, seeing the waves and storms of this river of Babylon; and then remembering that heavenly Sion, our native city, we cannot cease weeping and sighing. O holy Sion, where there are no changes, nor reverses, nor dangers, but all remains forever firm, established in perpetual being! Who has flung us into the midst of these difficulties? How are we driven out and exiled from our country, from the society of our friends and from our Creator! When shall we see ourselves delivered from these dangers, when will this exile cease, when shall we be secure, when shall we see ourselves there at home?

Secondly, says the saint, we bewail those whom the current of this river carries away. There are our brothers in the midst of this river of Babylon, of the stormy sea of this world; waves and tempests carry them away, throw them on crags and rocks, and never cease till they plunge them in the deep. Every day we see them drowned in thousands, as St. Bridget says, who saw in spirit souls falling down like flakes of snow into hell. Who would not weep for so great a loss! What heart so hard as not to break with grief and compassion at the loss of so many souls!

In the third place, we are seated on the bank of this river of Babylon for the aid and benefit of our brethren, to succor and give a hand to them in danger, to see if we can fish out and save anyone who is in the way of being drowned. That is our proper business: *I will make you fishers of men* (Matt. iv. 19). God has stationed us for

this purpose on this river bank of the Society to fish for souls, that from this point of vantage we may give a hand to those who are in danger of drowning. But here we have to consider two things. On the one hand there is the great favor that the Lord has done us, in marking us out and preferring us so much above those in the world that they are in the ring and we upon the platform, they are in the current of that river of Babylon in danger of perishing and drowning every moment, while God has set us upon the bank to do them good and lend them a hand to their rescue. On the other hand we must look to ourselves, and reflect that they who have to lend a hand to rescue and help those that are drowning in rivers, must themselves be very accomplished swimmers; otherwise they are likely to be drowned themselves. With the fury of death the drowning man seizes hold of his rescuer, and so they both go to the bottom. Great skill is required in the art of saving souls, and much virtue and perfection must he have who would rescue others from dangers without falling into the like himself.

It is related of the blessed St. Anselm that one day he was wrapt in ecstasy, and saw a river with a full volume of water and a strong rushing current, into which were poured all the filth and dirt and foulness of the whole round of the earth to such an excessive degree that you could not imagine anything in the world more noisome, filthy, and disgusting, or more insupportable than the waters that went down by that river. They were of such a furious nature that they carried away hopelessly all that they met, men and women, rich and poor, drowning them in their depths and plunging them in every moment, and with the same rapidity drawing them out, lifting them up and forthwith plunging them in again, without allowing them to rest for an instant. The glorious Anselm wondered at so extraordinary a spectacle, and asked what subsistence these people had and how they lived, for after all they were alive. He was answered that

these wretched creatures fed on the very garbage in which they were plunged and drank of the same, and with all that they lived quite content. The vision was interpreted to him, and he was told: That torrent of a river is the world, in which blind men are carried headlong, wallowing in their riches and honors and their fleshly and filthy pleasures. So wretched is their condition that, though they cannot set foot in the midst of so much filth, nevertheless they live contented, and reckon and hold themselves for happy and fortunate people. The saint was then lifted up to an enclosure or garden of ample and spacious dimensions. The walls, covered with plates of bright silver, shone with wondrous luster. In the midst was a meadow or lawn, and the grass in it was no ordinary or common grass, but was made of the finest gold, yet fresh and soft to such a degree that pleasantly and without difficulty it received anyone who seated himself thereon, and with him bent down and bowed even to the ground; nor did it remain withered or injured for that bowing down, but when he who was on it rose up, it once more stood up of itself as it was before. The air was balmy and fresh; and, in short, everything was so pleasant and agreeable that it really seemed a paradise, and to leave nothing to desire in point of happiness. The saint was told that this was the religious state, portrayed to the life.

CHAPTER VII

Continuation of the Subject of the Previous Chapter

THE glorious Bernard sums up the great benefits of religious life very well in these few words: "In religion," he says, "a man lives purer, falls seldomer, and when he does fall rises quicker, walks more cautiously, is visited by grace more frequently, rests more securely, dies more confidently, has a shorter purgatory, and a more abundant reward in heaven"—*Vivit purius, cadit rarius, surgit velo-*

cius, incedit cautius, irroratur frequentius, quiescit securius moritur fiducius, purgatur citius, praemiatur copiosius. In another place, speaking of the high dignity of religious, he says: "Your vocation is very high, it rises above the heavens, it equals the angels, it is like to angelic purity, for you not only profess all sanctity, but the perfection of all sanctity. It is for others to aim at serving God, but for you to aim at being ever in union with God." And a little lower down he says: "I do not know by what name I can more worthily address you, as heavenly men or earthly angels; for, though you live on earth, your *conversation is in heaven* (Phil. iii. 20); *you are not of the world* (John xv. 19), *but fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God* (Eph. ii. 19); you are like those blessed spirits that are sent to guard and defend us, who so occupy themselves in those ministrations about us as never to lose sight of God." Such is the life of the religious, who, though he lives on earth, has his heart in heaven; all his thought and conversation is of spiritual things and God, so that he can say with St. Paul, *Christ is my life* (Phil. i. 21). As outside there in the world, when a man is much given to hunting and has a great taste for it, we say that hunting is his life; and when a man is much given to the vice of gluttony, we say that his life is eating and drinking, so the Apostle says, *Christ is my life*, because he was wholly dedicated and offered to the service of Christ. So is likewise the religious.

The glorious St. Bernard applies to religious these words: *Our bed is strewn with flowers* (Cant. i. 15). As there is no place where men take their ease more pleasantly than in bed, so he says that in the Church the bed on which ease is found is religion, for in it one is free from the cares of the world and the solicitude of temporal things and things necessary for human life. We have good experience of the favor that God has done us in this matter; for in the Society our superiors are most particularly charged to provide

us with all things necessary for food and clothing, for study, for traveling, as well in time of sickness as in time of health. Thus we need not recur to our parents or relations; we leave them and we forget them, except to commend them to God. Whether we have any or have them not, whether they be rich or poor, the Society and its superiors are our father and mother; and with more than a father and mother's affection they take care to provide for all our temporal needs, so that we can afford to forget and disregard them, and attend solely to the end for which we came into religion, which is to labor for our own spiritual advancement and that of our neighbor. Clement of Alexandria says that it was for this purpose that God placed man in the earthly Paradise with possession and lordship of all things, that, having nothing to desire on earth, he might transfer all his desire to heaven. Now this is the idea of the Society. She engages herself to give us all that we need, to the end that, having no care of anything on earth, all our care and desire may be transferred to heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

Of the Renovation of Vows Practised in the Society, and of the Fruit Meant to Be Gained Thereby

WE read of our first fathers that, having met together in Paris on the day of the Assumption of our Lady, they went to the church of the same Queen of Angels, which is called Montmartre, that is, Martyrs' Mount, which is one league from Paris, and there, after having confessed and received the Most Holy Sacrament of the body of Christ our Redeemer, they made a vow to leave on a day that they appointed all that they had, without retaining more than the necessary journey-money for the journey to Venice. They also made a vow to employ themselves in the spiritual improvement of their neighbor; and to go on pilgrim-

age to Jerusalem, on condition that, once they had reached Venice, they should wait a whole year for an opportunity of embarking, and if they found such in the course of that year, they should go to Jerusalem, and having arrived they should endeavor to stay, and live always in those Holy Places; but if they could not find a passage in a year's time, or if after visiting the Holy Places they were unable to remain in Jerusalem, in that case they would go to Rome and, prostrate at the feet of the sovereign pontiff, the vicar of Christ our Lord, they would offer themselves for his holiness to dispose of them freely, wherever he would, for the good and salvation of souls. And these same vows they renewed again in the two following years on the same day of the Assumption of our Lady, in the same church, and with the same ceremonies. This was the origin of the renovation of vows, as practised in the Society before profession.

In the Fifth Part of the Constitutions, speaking of this renovation, our Father says: "This renovation of vows is not taking up a new obligation, but a calling to mind and confirmation of an obligation already undertaken." It is a repetition and confirmation of what is done, with satisfaction and rejoicing, as a sign and testimony that we do not find it irksome, nor repent of it, but rather are so glad and satisfied that we render many thanks to God for the favor that He has done us in taking us for His own and giving us grace to make this offering; and if we had not made it and had not offered ourselves, we would make it now and offer ourselves anew to God; and if there were a thousand worlds to leave for God, we would leave them all for His love; and if we had a thousand wills and hearts to give Him, we would give them all and offer them afresh. It is in this manner, with this joy and satisfaction, that this renovation should be made, and so it will be of great value and merit; for as complacency in sin committed and evil done is a new sin and offense against God, and deserving of new punish-

ment, so satisfaction and complacency in a good thing done is very good and very pleasing and meritorious in the sight of His Divine Majesty. In the measure in which the doing was good, the complacency in the thing done is also good.

Coming down now more to particulars, our Father says that this renovation is made for three objects. First, for an increase of devotion, for this renovation is a source of no small but very great devotion, as is the experience of those who prepare for it well. Secondly, to awaken in us the memory of the obligation that we have contracted to God, that so we may be animated to go on carrying out what we have promised, endeavoring every day to grow in virtue and perfection. Thirdly, to steady us more in our vocation; for, as it is a remedy against all temptations to make acts of the contrary virtue, since maladies are cured by their contraries, so in resistance to inward stirrings of discontent or disgust, wherewith the devil sometimes assails us on various occasions that occur throughout the year, it is a great support to renew our vows. For thereby the enemy is weakened and loses heart to attack us with the like temptation; and if there has been any weakness on our part in the past, it is thereby made up even with advantage, for by it the soul is furthered in perfection.

Virtue and perfection is very uphill work to our depraved nature; for so great is the weakness and misery to which we are reduced by sin and so great the inclination which we have to what is imperfect and evil that, though sometimes we start our spiritual exercises with fervor, thereafter we come little by little to grow slack and relax the fervor with which we began, and return to our imperfection and tepidity; we are like the weights of the clock, that are always tending to go down. As our flesh is by nature taken from the earth, so it is always drawing us down thereto. Therefore it is appropriate to take certain times of refreshment, so that, if we were on the way to a fall, we may reverse our course. So our Father would have us

particularly to take this refreshment twice a year by means of this renovation. So holy Mother Church has instituted two seasons in the year as two periods of refreshment to put new spirit into her children to begin to serve God, making a fresh start in fervor, to wit, Advent and Lent. Our Father in like manner would have us particularly twice a year refresh the memory of the offering that we have made to God and of the end for which the Lord has drawn us to religion, that we may renew ourselves therein and begin with fresh energy and fervor to aim at that to which the Lord has called us. And to that end he instituted such solemn celebrations as these in the Society, and that is the good that we should endeavor to get from them.

Not only at these times, but every day, our Father Francis Xavier used to say that we should make this renovation. In the "Collations of the Fathers" we read that the holy Abbot Paphnucius did so. Father Francis Xavier used to say that he had hardly found any means more efficacious, or defense stronger, for religious against the temptations of the devil and the flesh than the renewal of one's three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He advised its being done every morning after meditation, so to arm us against our enemies, and also after evening prayer. If we do not practise it so frequently as that, that is a good devotion which some have of doing so every time they communicate, and often to take account of themselves how they keep these vows, and whether there is anything that their conscience reproaches them with on that score.

The better to enable us to gain the end of this renovation, besides other corporal penances that are practised, such as abstinence and discipline, there goes before it in the first place a previous recollection of some days, during which we cease from our occupations and give ourselves more to prayer and spiritual exercises. In the second place there comes each one's giving an account of his conscience to the superior. Although this is done frequently during

the year, it is then done with greater exactness, and comprises all the last six months. This is one of the substantial observances that we have in the Society, and we shall treat of it afterwards. The third thing previous to renovation is a general confession made by each renovant to any confessor that he shall choose out of those appointed for that purpose. This is an old custom of the Society, and we have a rule about it.

These means are very proper for the end proposed. For each one, making a review of all his faults, comes to know his improvement or falling-off in spirit. He looks and considers whether he has improved more in the last six months than in the six months preceding; and this comparison and juxtaposition of the present time with the time preceding helps much to make a person ashamed of himself if he sees that he is not improving, and to bring him to start afresh with new energy, since it was for no other end that he came to religion. Moreover, looking at his faults all together and, as they say, in cold blood, a man knows what passion wars upon him most and what humor is most predominant in him, and so he may take to heart and resolve upon the remedy, making his particular examen on that point. Moreover, as all this is seen and considered at this time of renovation of vows, when a man takes in review the mercies and benefits that he has received from God, and in particular his call to religion, and sees himself on the one hand so much bounden, and on the other that on his part there has been nothing but faults, he humbles himself before our Lord, and is moved to amend himself and make a fresh start henceforth. Contrary set upon contrary, like white upon black, comes out and strikes observation much more. Contrast the amount that you have received, and the amount of what God has done for you, with the amount of what you have done for Him; see what your receipts are and what your disbursements, and you will see what reason you have for shame and self-humiliation. What

has resulted from such frequentation of sacraments, from so many penances and mortifications, from so much meditation, from so many examens, so many discourses and exhortations, so much spiritual reading? Into what abyss has all this gone? What is the profit that you have made of it? In this way each one should consider his faults when he prepares to give in his account and make his general confession, taking care to look and examine right well what is the outlet whereby all his fortune has streamed away and gone, to make sure of finding a remedy for it in future.

CHAPTER IX

Continuation of the Subject of the Previous Chapter

BESIDES what has been said, this renovation is also a thanksgiving for benefits received, according to the practice that we have described of the holy Abbot Arsenius. We keep feasts and festivals every year in thanksgiving and in memory and acknowledgment of a favor and benefits so great as that which the Lord has done us in drawing us out of the world and bringing us to religion—the beginning of all our good and a great mark of our predestination. As the Church every year keeps the feast day of the dedication of a material temple, so it is just that we should keep the feast of the dedication of our soul, which is the living temple of God. And since the best manner of returning thanks is by deeds, this renovation will be a very great and pleasing thanksgiving to God if it is done as it ought to be done, by taking care to renew and fortify ourselves more in our vows, and keep them more perfectly henceforth. This, as St. Gregory observes, is what the Apostle St. Paul says: *Be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind* (Eph. iv. 23). And this is what our Father asks of us, a spiritual renovation, not merely an outward one done

with the lips. When a picture is very old and faded, so that one can no longer see the outlines and figures, you restore it by putting on fresh colors and shades, whereby it becomes as pleasing and beautiful as when it was first completed. So we get old and worn out, our virtue fades away, because this corruptible body, our perverse and evilly-inclined nature, carries us off, seeking to make us fall in with its ways and follow its likings and desires. *The body with its corruption weighs down the soul* (Wisdom ix. 15). There is need for us to go back upon ourselves at times, and endeavor to renew and restore ourselves in our good purposes and aspirations. If we would have the hues of virtue not to fade in us, says St. Gregory, it is quite necessary every day to reckon that we are beginning afresh. Remember the resolution, fervor, and vigor with which you started this undertaking the day that you entered religion, and go to work now with that same intrepidity, energy, and keenness. This it is to renew ourselves, and this will be a very good thanksgiving for the benefit received, and highly pleasing to God.

Cassian recounts a brief and compendious exhortation which Abbot Pinutius addressed to a novice whom he was receiving in presence of the other religious, which each one may apply to himself, and it will greatly help him to attain the end of this renovation: "Take care never to take back anything of what you have renounced and cast off." You have offered and given yourself wholly to God and flung off all worldly things; beware of ever again taking up that which you have now renounced. You have renounced your property by the vow of poverty. Do not go back upon that by fixing your affections here in religion on little things and childish trifles; for it will profit you little to have given up great things if here you get a passion for small ones. You have renounced your will and judgment by the vow of obedience; see that you do not take it up again, but rather say with the spouse in the Canticles: *I have stripped me of*

my coat, how shall I put it on? (Cant. v. 3). I have stripped and denuded myself of my own will and my own judgment; God grant that it may never come back to be mine again. You have renounced and flung away the enjoyments, comforts, and amusements of the world and of the flesh; take care that they find no entrance into your soul in future. You have given up and scorned the vanity and pride and good opinion of the world; see that such things never come again to revive and rise from the dead in you, when you see yourself a senior, when you see yourself a priest, when you see yourself a doctor or preacher. Make it a matter of great account never again to rebuild or re-erect what you have thrown down and destroyed, for, as the Apostle says: *If what I have cast down I again build up, I make myself a prevaricator* (Gal. ii. 18); for that would be to prevaricate and go back after having *put your hand to the plough* (Luke ix. 62). Persevere to the end in the poverty and abandonment of all things which you have offered and promised to God, and in the humility and patience in which you persevered so many days, begging with many tears that they would receive you into religion.

St. Bernard, St. Basil, and St. Bonaventure add another reason. See that you are not your own, but all that you are and all that you have is God's, since you have already offered it and wholly made it over to His Majesty by the vows that you have taken. Wherefore beware of once again seizing upon and taking back what you have already given away and offered, for that would be theft, theft being "laying hands on what is another's against the will of the owner"—*contrectatio rei alienae invito domino*. Have we not said above that he who enters religion gives to God the tree along with the fruit? Now, if you give to another a tree to transplant into his garden, and afterwards take the fruit, that would be theft. But that is what a religious does who does his own will and not that of obedience; nay, it would even be, they say, a sacrilege, for it would be

stealing a thing that has been offered and dedicated to God; and such theft would be a sacrilege, a thing that God greatly abhors. I am the Lord *who love justice, and hate rapine in a holocaust* (Isaias lxi. 8). But who would dare to steal from a holocaust that is wholly God's and already offered and dedicated to His Majesty? St. Bernard says that there is no worse sacrilege: "No crime of sacrilege is worse than this of resuming the dominion of the will that you had offered to God by vow; for the greater the thing offered, the graver the theft of taking it back?" Let us add here what is added in the law of holocausts. So much did God insist on the holocaust's being wholly offered to Him and burned and consumed in His honor, that He gave command that, after it had been offered and burned, they should once more offer and burn the ashes, in order that, if there had remained any piece of fat, or any particle of bone, or any fragment of rib, it should be all finally consumed and reduced to ashes in honor of God. *Even to the very embers thou shalt cause it to be consumed* (Levit. vi. 11).

St. Augustine explains to our purpose that text of Genesis (ii. 15): *God took Adam and put him in the earthly paradise to work and keep it*. Let us see, says the saint, what it is that the Holy Ghost means by this. Can it be that God would have Adam exercise there a husbandman's office, and dig and cultivate and work the land? It is not to be believed, he says, that before his sin God should oblige and condemn him to this labor. Although some exercise by way of amusement and recreation, such as amongst us many owners are wont to take in their gardens and orchards, was not inconsistent with that state of innocence, yet to have it put upon him by way of forced labor and necessity did not suit that state, nor was there any need of it, since the land of itself yielded crops without that labor. And besides, what is the meaning of saying that God put Adam in Paradise to keep it? From whom was he to keep it, since there were not at that time any enemies or other races of men

that he could possibly fear? And as for beasts and animals, there was just as little reason for his keeping it against them, since before sin animals did no harm to man or his possessions. And if he had to fear them, one man alone could hardly keep such a large piece of ground as Paradise was, and drive off such a multitude of living creatures as there were there. He would have had to fence it in with a fence so extensive that the serpent could not have got in; and, before making such a fence, he would have had to drive out the serpents and other beasts that were inside. The meaning cannot be that God put man in Paradise to keep it bodily, or to dig and plough it. What, then, is meant by the phrase, *to work and keep it*? Do you know what? says the saint. God put man in that Paradise to do the work of precepts and commandments that God had given him, and by doing that work to keep it for himself, and not lose it, as he did lose it, by not doing the work. Now to apply this to our purpose. Why do you suppose God has put you in this paradise of religion, paradise as the saints call it with much reason? Do you know why? That you may work out and fulfil the precepts and commandments of God, and the counsels of His Gospel that we have in our rules; and that by doing that work you may keep and preserve this paradise for yourself, and not lose it, as others have lost it because they would not keep it.

St. Augustine gives another explanation of these words. He very well observes that Scripture does not say *ut custodiret paradisum*, but *ut custodiret illum*, where *illum* may represent not *it* (paradise), but *him* (the man himself). And this sense pleases the saint better. God put man in Paradise, not that man might work at and cultivate Paradise, nor keep it, but that God might work and keep man himself there. As it is said that man works the land, not making it to be land, but making it fertile and fruitful by his labor and cultivation; so with greater reason God, Who created man out of nothing, may be said to work on man

when by that work He makes him just, holy, and perfect. Thus, then, God placed man in the earthly Paradise to work on him there and perfect him, until He should translate him from the earthly to the heavenly paradise, bringing him to the state of everlasting bliss. In the same way do not you suppose that God has placed you in this paradise of religion for you to work on it and keep it—it has another and better gardener, and a better keeper and defender—but for Him to work on you, to make of you a mortified man, to make of you a spiritual man, to make of you a holy and perfect man, and so to keep you till He translates you from this earthly to the heavenly paradise.

With these and the like reasons and considerations we should help ourselves to answer to this great favor and gather the fruit of this renovation. If there is put before you the hardship of religious life, remember the great reward and recompense to be given you for it, for it *hath a great reward*, as the Apostle says (Heb. x. 35). The blessed St. Francis used often to say, thereby to exhort and encourage his religious: “We have promised great things, but greater things are promised us.” Let us keep our promises, and sigh after what is promised. And when the friars make their profession, offering and making promise of their vows to God, the superior says: “I, too, promise thee life everlasting.” I, then, also promise you on the part of God life everlasting, if you keep what you have promised; and that with a bond under the hand of Christ Himself, Who says in the holy Gospel: *And thou shalt have treasure in heaven* (Matt. xix. 21). Thou shalt have a treasure; thou shalt be great and glorious in the kingdom of God.

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III

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CHAPTER I

That the Vow of Poverty Is the Foundation of Evangelical Perfection

BLESSED are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matt. v. 3).

With these words Christ our Redeemer opened that sovereign Sermon on the Mount and the eight beatitudes. And though some doctors and saints explain these words as applying to humility, others with much reason understand them as recommending voluntary poverty, especially that which we religious profess. And in that sense we will take them here, which is the sense of St. Basil and of many other saints. It is no small praise of this poverty of spirit that Christ our Redeemer began with it that sovereign sermon and put it for the first of the beatitudes. But a greater praise of it is that He taught it all His life by word and example. This was the first lesson that great Master read us at His birth from the chair of the manger. That is what was taught us by the stable, by those poor swaddling clothes, by the need that He had of the hay and the breath of beasts to warm and cover Him. It was also His last lesson—a lesson which, to impress it more upon us, He would leave behind Him, reading it to us from that other chair of the Cross, dying stripped and in extreme poverty, so that for His shroud they had to buy a winding sheet as an alms. What greater poverty could there be than that? And as was the beginning and the end, so was the whole tenor of His life, for He had not a shilling to pay the tribute that they demanded of Him (Matt. xvii. 24-27). He had no house to rest in, nor room to celebrate the Passover with His disciples, but all had to be lent him. *The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air their nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head* (Matt. viii. 20).

The Redeemer of the world would lay poverty for the foundation stone of evangelical perfection, saying: *If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor* (Matt. xix. 21). And to enforce this counsel, He would leave it confirmed and authorized by His example. Thus we see what a settled thing this foundation of poverty was in the primitive Church, as is related in the Acts of the Apostles; for at that time there was no *mine* or *thine* among the faithful, but all was in common, since all who had houses or inheritances or other possessions sold them and took the price of them and laid it at the feet of the apostles, and out of that fund distribution was made to each according to his need (Acts ii. 32). St. Jerome observes that they laid it at the feet of the apostles, to show that riches are to be trampled on and despised and thrown underfoot. And St. Cyprian, St. Basil, St. Jerome, and others say that the faithful at that time made a vow of poverty, and they prove it by the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira, who, because they had hidden away part of the proceeds of the sale of their inheritance, were punished with sudden death, which is a sign that they were under a vow, otherwise they would not have deserved so severe a punishment. The Church, then, being taught this divine doctrine, the saints and all the founders of religious orders lay down the vow of poverty as a necessary and most firm foundation of their orders. So our Father, following this ancient doctrine, begins to treat of poverty with the words: "Poverty, as a firm wall of religion, must be loved and preserved in its purity as far as ever shall be possible with the grace of God." Poverty is the wall and foundation of a religious house. Contrary to the way of the world, in which the foundation of rights of primogeniture and estates is property and riches, with us it is the other way about. The foundation of the religious state and of the height of perfection is poverty; for, as the building that we have to erect is different from the buildings of the world, the foundation also is different.

This is what Christ our Redeemer wished to teach us by those comparisons which He draws in the holy Gospel, saying: *What man is there who, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and reckon the cost, if he have sufficiency for it, lest after he hath laid the foundation, and hath not wherewith to finish it, all who see it may begin to scoff at him, saying: This man began to build, and had not wherewith to finish. Or what king, going to war with another king, doth not first sit down and deliberate whether he is able, with ten thousand men, to meet him who cometh against him with twenty thousand; otherwise, while he is still afar off, he sendeth an embassy and asketh for terms of peace* (Luke xiv. 28-32). Thence he concludes and draws the inference: *So then everyone of you who doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple* (xiv. 33). Hereby He gives us to understand that what for fighting purposes is the size of the army, and for building purposes the abundance of funds, poverty and the renunciation of the things of the world are for spiritual building and spiritual warfare. So the blessed St. Augustine explains it, saying that by the building of this tower of the Gospel is signified the perfection of Christian life; and the cost and capital needed to build it is the renunciation of all things; for in that way a man is more free and disengaged to serve God, and better secured against his enemy, the devil, by presenting less surface for his enemy to attack him and make war upon him.

St. Jerome and St. Gregory, following out this argument, say that we have come into this world to wrestle with the devil, who is naked and possesses nothing in this world. It is necessary for us also to strip ourselves of these worldly things to be able to wrestle with him. For if a man with his clothes on wrestles with another who is naked, he who has his clothes on will soon fall to the ground, because he gives the other a hold to overthrow him. Would you fight manfully with the devil? Off with your clothes, strip your-

self of all earthly things, let the devil get no hold upon you to make you fall. For what are the things of earth but as clothes to the body? He who has more of them will all the sooner be overcome, because he gives the devil a greater hold to seize him and throw him to the ground. St. Chrysostom asks how it is that Christians in the primitive Church were so good and fervent, while today they are so slack and remiss; and he answers that it is because then they went out to wrestle with the devil naked, stripped of their goods and estates; while today they go out heavily clad in benefices, estates, and honors, and all this clothing gets in their way and hinders them terribly. That is why we religious give up riches and divest ourselves of all the things of the world, that so we may be free and unimpeded in our wrestling with the devil and our following of Christ. The wrestler is stronger in the struggle for being stripped; the swimmer divests himself of his clothes to pass the river; the traveler travels more lightly for leaving behind him his burden and wallet.

On this account the first vow that we make in religion is of poverty, as the foundation of all the rest. As St. Paul says that *covetousness is the root of all evils* (I Tim. vi. 10), so poverty is the root and foundation of all good things and all virtues. St. Ambrose enlarges upon this. As riches are the instrument of all vices, because a man with money in his pocket has the wherewith to carry out his desire in the matter of all the vices and sins that he has a mind for, so the renouncing and divesting of oneself of all things for Christ engenders and preserves all virtues, as may be seen by running through the list. St. Gregory says: *Paupertas bonis mentibus solet esse custodia humilitatis*—"Poverty, to good minds, is apt to be the guardian of humility." As for chastity, it is easily seen what a great help poverty is, and austerity in diet and in dress, which makes also for abstinence and temperance. And so we might run through all the virtues. Therefore do the saints call pov-

erty sometimes the mistress and guardian of virtues, and sometimes they call it their mother. And our Father uses this latter appellation in his Constitutions: "Let all love poverty as their mother;" for poverty, like a good and true mother, engenders and preserves in our souls the rest of the virtues and keeps afoot religious discipline. So we see that the orders which have given up poverty have given up religious life; they are as children that are not like their mother. Let us, then, cherish this holy poverty as a mother, which means not any sort of love; but an intense love, a tender love, a love accompanied by reverence and regard. The blessed St. Francis spoke of *Lady Poverty*. And in the Rule of St. Clare it is said: "We bind ourselves to our Lady, Holy Poverty."

CHAPTER II

Of the Great Reward Wherewith the Lord Rewards the Poor of Spirit

THAT young man in the Gospel who desired perfection and was not content with keeping the commandments, was sad and went off when the Lord told him that, if he desired to be perfect, he must sell all that he had and give to the poor. He had many possessions, and was attached to his property, and had no heart nor pluck to leave it. There was wanting in him the capital necessary for building the tower of evangelical perfection (Luke xiv. 28). That the like may not happen to us, and that we may have courage and strength to renounce all things of the world and break with it altogether, and be very glad to have done so, Christ our Redeemer puts before us the great reward we shall gain thereby. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 3). See if it be a good investment to give all things of earth for the kingdom of heaven; and whether he would be a

wise trader, who should divest himself of all things to gain this treasure. St. Bernard observes that in this beatitude our Lord speaks, not in the future, as in the others, but in the present: *Theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. The kingdom is already yours although they have not yet made it over to you, because you have bought it at the price of the things you have given up. It is as though you had given a hundred guineas for a piece of gold plate or for a precious stone, which the seller still keeps in his house. That piece of plate is yours, though they have not yet handed it over to you—yours because you have laid down the price in money for it. Thus the kingdom of heaven belongs to the man who is poor in spirit. He has bought it and given all he had for it. *The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls: having found one precious pearl, he goeth and selleth all he hath and buyeth it* (Matt. xiii. 45-46). So you have made the kingdom of heaven your own, since you have given all you had for it.

The promises of Christ do not stop there. He promises more than that to the poor in spirit. But can there be anything more than the kingdom of heaven? Yes, because there are promotions there in heaven, as there are here on earth for good soldiers; and He promises to the poor in spirit a promotion and pre-eminence high above the rest. Upon the departure of that young man who would not abandon all he had, Christ our Redeemer observed how difficult it was for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven, whereupon St. Peter stood out from the number of the rest and said: *Lord, we have left all things, and followed thee: what then shall we have?* He answered: *Amen, I say to you that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His majesty, ye too shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. xix. 27-28). The saints declare that this dignity and pre-eminence is to be understood as belonging to all those who have imitated the apostles in the state of

poverty, confirmed by vow, such as religious who die in the grace of God. They say that they will all hold this pre-eminence and dignity; that at the day of judgment they will not stand before the divine tribunal so much to be judged as to be assessors in judgment with Christ, and as such to approve and confirm the sentence of our Savior. So say expressly St. Augustine, Bede, St. Gregory, and it is the common opinion of the doctors. They apply this text of Isaias: *The Lord will come in judgment with the ancients and princes of his people* (iii. 14); and what Solomon says in Proverbs, speaking of the Spouse of the Church: *Her husband is noble in the gates, when he shall sit with the senators of the land* (xxx. 23). Those they say are *the princes* that are to come to judge along with Christ; and the *ancients* and *senators*, who are to be seated with the Spouse of the Church, that is, Christ, at the last day of judgment. And though some wish to assign this dignity to all the canonized saints, yet the common opinion, which St. Thomas follows, is that they only will hold this dignity who have professed the state of poverty, even though they are not canonized. And theologians and saints allege many reasons and very good arguments from the fitness of things why this pre-eminence should be assigned to them who have made profession of voluntary poverty rather than to the rest of the blessed. St. Gregory very aptly cries out here with the prophet: *Exceeding honor, O Lord, thou hast done to thy friends. O Lord, their rule has been extraordinarily strengthened* (Psalm cxxxviii. 17). Blessed and praised be Thou, O Lord, Who hast thus honored Thy friends, particularly those who have made themselves poor for Thy love, since, not content with giving them the kingdom of heaven, Thou hast made them such great and eminent princes therein as that they shall be universal judges of the whole earth along with Thee.

CHAPTER III

That God Rewards the Poor in Spirit Not Only in the Next Life but Also in This

THAT you may not think that all your reward is made out to your account for the next life, and fancy that your pay is credited to you with a long time to run before it is due, whereas you pay your contribution in money down on the spot, I say God rewards the poor in spirit not only in the next life, but also in this, and that very handsomely. We men are so self-interested and so moved by the present and visible that, when that does not come to hand, we seem to have no heart left to do anything. God takes account of our weak nature and would not even in this life leave without reward those who renounce all things for His love. So He adds immediately beyond the promise mentioned: *And whoever for love of me shall leave house, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children, or any property or inheritance, shall receive a hundredfold, and afterwards life everlasting* (Matt. xix. 29). The hundredfold is to be understood of something that he shall receive in this life, and after that, in the next world, life everlasting. So Christ Himself declares by St. Mark (x. 30): *There is none that hath left house, and so forth, for me and the gospel, but shall receive a hundred times as much now at this time, and in the world to come life everlasting*. You shall not only receive the reward of life everlasting hereafter, for having made yourself poor for Christ, but you shall receive a hundredfold in this life. St. Jerome explains this *hundredfold* of spiritual goods. He says: "He who leaves temporal goods for God shall receive spiritual, which in comparison with those others is receiving a hundredfold." But Cassian explains it of temporal goods themselves. He says: "Even in these we religious receive a hundredfold in this life, according to the words which the Evangelist St. Mark

there puts into the text." We see this accomplished quite to the letter, and every day we say to fresh comers into religion: "You have left one house for Christ, and you have ever so many houses. All the houses of the order are yours; God has given you them in this life for the one that you have left. You have left a father and a mother, and God has given you in their stead so many parents who cherish you more than those whom you have left, take more care of you and see better what is for your good. You have left your brothers, and you have found here so many brothers who love you more than they did, because they love you for the love of God without any interested motive of their own. You have left sundry servants in the world—and perhaps you had not any—and here you have so many to serve you—one as bursar, one as dispenser, one as cook, one as refectorian, one as infirmarian; and what is more, if you travel to Castille, or Portugal, or France, or Italy, or Germany, or the Indies, or any other part of the world, you will find that they have there already set up for you a house with ever so many attendants, who will serve you with the same care and diligence, so that there is no prince on earth who is so well off." Is not that receiving a hundredfold in this life, and more than a hundredfold?

Then what shall I say of the very things that you have left? Even in that respect you have here much more than in the world. God gives you in this life a hundred times more than you have left. You are more master of the possessions and riches of the world than the rich themselves. They are not masters of their estates and riches, but you are; they are servants and slaves of them. Holy Scripture calls them *men of riches* (Psalm lxxv. 6); it does not say *riches of men*, but *men of riches*, to give us to understand that money is their mistress, since it is she that orders them about, and they are her servants and slaves. For her they serve, for her they labor—to acquire her, to increase her, to keep her. And the more property and riches they hold,

the more slaves they are, since they have to spend more care and labor over what they have. *The fullness and abundance of the rich suffereth him not to sleep*, says the Wise Man (Eccles. v. 11). On his bed at night he goes rolling over from side to side, because his estates and riches drive sleep away from him. But how free is the religious from care! Without reckoning whether things are dear or cheap, whether it is a good year or a bad one, he has everything he wants, *as having nothing, yet possessing all things*, as the Apostle says (II Cor. vi. 10). Thus religious live at ease and without care, as having nothing. How, then, about contentment? There is given us a hundred times more than what we had in the world. If you do not believe that, ask folk in the world and those who are best off there, and you will see how many untoward occurrences and disappointments they meet at every step, from which religious are quite free. How, then, about honor? You come in for a hundred times more here in religion than you would have found there; because the nobleman, the prince, the prelate, who there in the world would have taken no notice of you, now, when he sees you wearing an old patched habit, does you much honor and shows you great respect. How, then, about leisure, quiet, and tranquillity? In everything God gives us a hundred times more in religion.

But why all this? Do you know why? That, being unembarrassed and unencumbered by things of earth, we may put our whole heart in heaven; that the solicitude and care that we should have had to take over things of the world, and in the quest of what is needful for the support of the body, we should exchange for the care of pleasing God more and more and growing every day in virtue and perfection, according to the saying of the prophet of the children of Israel: *God gave them the regions of the nations and the labors of peoples, that they might keep his commandments and observe his law* (Psalm civ. 44-45). This

is also what God says by the Prophet Ezechiel, speaking of priests: *Let my priests not have any inheritances, since I mean to be their inheritance. Give them no possessions in the land, since I am bound to be their possession* (Ezech. xliv. 28). For this, then, do we leave our inheritances and possessions, because God wishes to be our inheritance and possession. Happy lot of the religious, in that such an inheritance and possession has fallen to him! The lot of our inheritance has come to fall to the best advantage; we have come off well, since to our brethren there has fallen earth, and to us heaven. *The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance* (Psalm xv. 5), *God of my heart and my portion forever* (Psalm lxxii. 26). The blessed St. Francis used to say that poverty was a heavenly and divine virtue, because thereby men despised and trampled underfoot all earthly things and rid themselves of all lets and hindrances, to the end that their soul, free and unshackled, should be at liberty to attend only to the things of heaven and union with God.

CHAPTER IV

In What Poverty of Spirit Consists

IN these words, *Blessed are the poor in spirit* (Matt. v. 3), Christ our Redeemer clearly defines in what consists the perfection of that poverty which we religious profess. Poverty of spirit means poverty of will and affection. The outward act of abandonment of property and worldly wealth is not enough; we must abandon such things in heart also. Poverty of spirit means detachment of heart from all things here below, that freely and without impediment we may follow Christ and give ourselves wholly over to seeking perfection, which is the end at which we aim and for which we came to religion. St. Jerome marks this well in the answer of Christ our Redeemer to St. Peter. Peter

had said: *Lord, we have left all things.* And Christ answered: *Verily I say to you that ye who have followed me shall sit judging the twelve tribes of Israel* (Matt. xix. 28). Observe, says the saint, He does not say simply, *ye who have left all things*, but *ye who have followed me*. Leaving all things was what Diogenes also did, Antisthenes, and many other philosophers. Among them St. Jerome tells of a Theban named Crates, that, being very rich, and intending to go to Athens to give himself to philosophy and virtue, to the end that riches might be no obstacle to his course, he sold all his inheritances and possessions and, gathering from the sale a great quantity of gold, he flung the whole mass into the sea, saying: "Go into the depth, ye wicked covetous desires; I will drown you, that I may not be drowned by you." Of another philosopher named Phocion, a man of great distinction in his poverty, it is related that, when Alexander sent him a great sum in gold, a hundred talents, that make in our money 600,000 crowns [\$125,000], he asked those who brought it: "Why did Alexander send me this?" They answered: "Simply for your virtue and because he takes you for the best and most virtuous man among the Athenians." The philosopher said: "Then let me remain so," and he would on no account receive the money. This act and speech was so celebrated among the Greek philosophers that for a long time no other question was discussed among them than who had been the greater, Alexander, or Phocion, who had despised the riches of Alexander. If you take me for a good and virtuous man, let me be so and do not send me riches to hinder me. There are many instances given of this.

On the other hand, St. Augustine and St. Jerome say that it is not the gold either nor the silver that does the harm; and they quote the example of many saints and patriarchs of the Old Testament who were very rich, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and the patriarch Joseph, who was second in the kingdom of Pharaoh and held command over the

whole land of Egypt; and Daniel and his three companions, who held high office in Babylon, as did Mardochee and Esther in the whole kingdom of Assuerus; David, Job, and many others who in the midst of the riches and pomps of the world held to the principle of poverty of spirit, since their heart was not wedded and attached to such things, and well observed the advice of the prophet: *If riches flow in, set not thy heart upon them* (Psalm lxi. 11).

But, coming to our point, there are two requisites for this poverty of spirit which we religious profess. The first is that we should actually renounce and leave all the things of the world, as we do by the vow of poverty. The second is that we should leave also all affection for such things, that our heart may be disengaged and free to give itself entirely to God and to perfection. St. Thomas says that the first requisite, the actual giving up of things, is in view of the second, that so we may more easily give up affection for them, the one being a very efficacious means to the other. For this he quotes St. Augustine's saying: "Earthly things, when we hold and possess them, carry away the heart more;" and so it is more difficult to lose affection for them than when we have them not. It is much easier not to crave after what one does not hold than to give up what one holds already. What one does not hold is cast off for a foreign thing; but what one does hold is like a thing united and incorporated in self. As St. Thomas says, leaving it is like cutting a limb off, a very sensible and painful operation. St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and St. Gregory treat this subject very well, commenting upon those words of the Apostle St. Peter. St. Jerome says: St. Peter and the rest of the apostles were poor fishermen, who gained their livelihood by the labor of their hands and had nothing but a miserable pittance, an old boat and some greatly mended nets; and yet with all assurance they say, *Lord, we have left all things*. St. Gregory answers that they are right in saying so; since in this matter, my brethren, we should

look rather to the heart than to the goods that are given up. He leaves much who has got nothing left; he leaves much who leaves all, be it little or much. We are much attached at heart to what we possess and to the desire of what we do not possess. Now the apostles left much because they not only left what they had, but also the desire of having. He leaves much who leaves all that he has, and therewith the desire of having. St. Augustine says the same. The apostles were right in saying that they had left all things, though they had only a few poor boats and some rotten nets, since "he leaves everything in the world and despises it all, who despises not only what he has, but also all that he could desire"—*Revera omnia contemnit, qui non solum quantum potuit, sed etiam quantum voluit habere contemnit.*

This is a great comfort for those of us who leave little because we have not more. St. Augustine says, speaking of himself, after he had sold and left what he had: "Not because I was not rich shall less be put down to my credit, for neither were the apostles rich; but he leaves all the world, who leaves not only all that he has, but all that he could desire"—*Non enim quia dives non fui, ideo minus mihi imputabitur; nam nec apostoli, qui priores hoc fecerunt, divites fuerunt. Sed totum mundum dimittit, qui et illud quod habet et quod optat habere dimittit.* A man gives up as much for God, as for God's sake he ceases to desire; and so you have left all the world and all things in it if you have quitted the affection and desire, not only of what you had and might have had, but also of all that you could have wished for and desired; and so you may well rejoice and say with the apostles: *Lord, we have left all things for thee.* And he who had much there in the world should not make more of himself on that account nor think that on that account he has left much; for he leaves little, if he does not leave off the desire of all that he could wish for and desire. Much more has another left, in that he has

abandoned the desire of all things in the world.

In this, then, consists the essence of this spiritual poverty, in this renouncement, disregard, and contempt of all things, trampling all things of the world under our feet and, as though they were dung, saying with St. Paul: *I reckon all things as dung that I may gain Christ* (Phil. iii. 8). We should trample on all things, and despise and hold them for nothing, to gain Christ.

These are the poor in spirit whom He calls blessed, and with much reason, not only because theirs is already the kingdom of heaven, as we have said, but also because they begin from now to enjoy a very great satisfaction, a state of happiness and blessedness on earth. Happiness does not consist in a multitude of possessions; it consists, says Boethius, "in having everything that one wishes for, and wishing for nothing that one ought not to wish." This the poor in spirit have, more than the rich and powerful of the world. The poor in spirit have all that they desire, because they desire nothing beyond what they have; with that they are content and desire nothing more; rather it seems to them that they have too much of everything. But the rich men of the world are never satisfied or content. *The miser will never have enough of money* (Eccles. v. 9); avarice never says, "It is enough," for these things never can avail to satisfy the appetite, but rather stimulate and increase it. As the dropsical man, the more he drinks, the more he thirsts, so the miser, the more he gets, the more he covets what he is short of, taking no account of what he has, but considering what he might have. What he is short of gives him more pain than all his wealth gives him pleasure. Thus he spends his whole life in pain and torment, a-hungering and longing and striving to get more.

It is related of Alexander the Great that, hearing the lecture of a philosopher named Anaxarchus, who discussed and argued the existence of infinite worlds, he began to weep; and when his attendants asked him what he was

weeping for, "Don't you think I have reason to weep," he said, "seeing that there are so many worlds, as this man says, and we have not been able to make ourselves masters of one?" The desire of what was wanting to him gave him more pain than all his conquests gave him satisfaction. On the other hand, that other philosopher, with one old cloak and a poor mantle, went about as cheerful and gay as though it were always Easter time for him. He was more satisfied and content and rich in his poverty than Alexander with all the world at his beck. And Diogenes the Cynic said a very good thing to the same Alexander, as St. Basil relates. Alexander came to this philosopher in his poverty and said to him: "You seem to me to be in want of many things; ask, and I will give you them." The philosopher replied: "Sire, who do you think is in greater want, I who want no more than my cloak and my wallet, or you who, being King of Macedon, expose yourself to such danger to enlarge your kingdom, and the whole world is hardly enough to satisfy your desires? I am richer than you are." St. Basil says that was a good answer, and so it was; for tell me, who is the richer, he who has a surplus or he who has a deficit? Clearly, he who has a surplus. Now this philosopher reckoned that he had enough and more than enough, and lacked nothing of what he wished for, seeing that he wished for no more than he had; while much was wanting to Alexander the Great, considering what he desired and wanted to have. Thus the philosopher was richer than Alexander, and more was wanting to Alexander than to the philosopher.

True wealth and happiness and contentment in this life do not consist in great possessions, but in the fulfilment of one's desires and the satisfaction of one's will; nor does poverty consist in the want of things, but in hunger and desire for getting them and insatiable thirst for having them. "Away from that," says Plato, "anyone who is good will also be rich." St. Chrysostom brings a good compari-

son to illustrate this. If a man were very thirsty and, after drinking one jug of water and another, could not satisfy the burning thirst that he felt within him, we could not call such a one happy and blessed for the mere fact that he had great abundance of water to drink. More happy and blessed should we hold him to be who was not thirsty and had no craving for drink. The former is like a dropsical man or a man in a high fever, and the latter like one in sound and good health. This, then, is the difference between those who yearn after riches and fortune and the truly poor in spirit who are content with what they have got and desire nothing of this world. The latter are healthy, the former sick; the latter are satisfied, the former hungry and thirsty; the latter are rich, the former poor. This is what the Holy Ghost says by Solomon: *What meaneth all this, that he who hath nothing is very rich; and he who hath ample property and wealth is as a needy poor man, ever hungering after and desiring more, and fancying that he is always short of something?* (Prov. xiii. 7). Do you know what it means? This is the misery and wretchedness, the "damned spot" that riches and goods of the world always carry with them, that they cannot satisfy nor give contentment; and this is the happiness and blessedness that poverty of spirit carries with it, that it puts its possessors in the blissful state of beginning to enjoy from henceforth an extreme satisfaction.

It is related of Socrates that he used to say: "God has need of nothing; and he is most like God, who has need of the fewest things and is content with the fewest." Passing through the market place and seeing the multitude of things sold there, he was wont to say, talking to himself: "What a lot of these things I have no need of!" The ignorant common herd and the avaricious and covetous, when they see such a multitude of things, sigh and say: "How many things I am short of!"

CHAPTER V

Of Religious Who, Having Left Greater Things, Get a Passion in Religion for Lesser Things

FROM what has been said it follows in the first place that, if we who give up the world with its property and riches do not also give up affection for those things, we are not poor in spirit, since that poverty consists not merely in a bodily and external separation from the things of the world, but further in a detachment of will and affection from them; and this is the main point of poverty in spirit. If there still remains in you a passion for those things, you have not left them altogether, but have brought them with you into religion, since you carry them in your heart. Thus you are not truly poor, but only in outward pretense; and consequently not a true and perfection religious, but a pretended one. It is only in body that you are in religion, but in spirit and heart in the world; you falsely bear the name of religious.

Secondly, it follows that a religious who has given up and despised the wealth and riches of the world, and here in religion gets a passion for little things, for a room, an article of clothing, a book, a picture, and other like things, is not truly and perfectly poor in spirit. The reason is the same as above; for the essence of poverty in spirit consists in giving up affection for the things of the world and having the heart detached from them; whereas this man has not given up this affection, but that which he had for those things in the world, here in religion he has transferred and changed to little things, and his heart is as affectionated and attached to those trifles as it was there in the world to wealth and riches.

Cassian treats this topic very well. I know not, he says, how to characterize a ridiculous thing that happens with some religious, that after they have left the property and

riches that they had in the world, we see them in religion so careful and solicitous about little things and trifles, seeking and trying after superfluities and ill-placed conveniences to such a degree that sometimes the affection and solicitude which they have for these things are greater than what they had in the world for their entire estate. Little will it profit these people, he says, to have given up much property and great riches, since they have not given up their affection for them, but have only transferred and changed it to these small trifling objects. The covetous affection which now in religion they can no longer exercise on costly articles, they keep and exercise on things trifling and cheap, clearly showing thereby that they have not given up the covetous affection, but changed and transferred it to these childish trinkets. They keep the same covetousness here as there, as though the evil lay in the gold or in the difference of metals and furniture, and not in the passion and affection of the heart; or as though we had left great things to set our heart on trifles. We did not leave those great things for that. We left and broke with greatness that here it might be the easier for us to despise the less. Otherwise, if the covetous affection keeps its hold on our heart, what matter does it make to me whether it be about great things or about cheap and small things, since we are here as affectionated and attached to those little things, and our heart as taken up and hampered with them, as it could have been about great things? It all comes to the same, when you cannot see the sun for having a plate put before your eyes, whether the plate be of gold or iron or tin; the one is as much of an obstacle as the other.

Abbot Mark says the same in a consultation or colloquy that he holds, conversing with his soul. "You will tell me, my well-beloved, that we do not gather gold or silver, we have no inheritances or possessions; and I will answer thee that it is not gold or inheritances that do the harm, but the ill use of those things and the disorderly affection for

them." So we see that some rich people pleased God and were saints, as were Abraham and Job and David, because they did not fasten their heart and affections on their riches. But we, without having riches, having already given them up, keep up and maintain the vice of covetousness over base and good-for-nothing things. We do not gather gold or silver, but we get together cheap knick-knacks and set our heart upon them and bear them as much affection as we did gold and silver in the world; and here we worry sometimes as much about these things as we should have done there in the world about those other things, and perhaps more. We do not come in for bishoprics, nor aim at dignities, nor ambition such things as that; but we desire the petty compliments and good opinion of men and take all possible means to secure them; we rejoice in being praised and well thought of by people in the house as much as worldly persons do by those around about them.

More miserable and more worthy of reprehension are we, say these holy men, than are people in the world, for having brought ourselves down to a lower level than they. For when men of the world set their heart on anything, it is on things that seem of some consideration and value; but we, having given up those things, fix our affections on cheap and petty objects. We have turned children. We should have gone on making ourselves men, and perfect men, growing every day, as St. Paul says, *unto a perfect man* (Eph. iv. 13), and we are doing just the reverse. Of men, strong men, that we were when we entered religion, leaving all things in the world and breaking manfully with it all, we have made ourselves babies, setting our hearts on the toys and baubles of children. And as the baby, when you take away its apple and its plaything, begins to cry, so these folk, when you deprive them of the trifle that they had set their hearts upon and do not grant them what they ask for, at once bristle up and speak out their mind. It is

just as Cassian says—on the one hand it is a thing to make you laugh, and on the other it is a sad and pitiful sight, to see a grave personage, a religious, who to be sure had the heart to despise the world and all that it contained, come to be such a slave of mean and petty objects and be as much upset and put out as a baby, because they refuse it an apple, because they have taken away a toy.

The glorious St. Bernard, writing to some religious, says: "More miserable are we religious than all the rest of mankind if in religion we are to seek these childish trifles and for them lose all merit of what we have given up and done hitherto. What blindness, or to say better, what madness and folly it is for us, who have given up greater things, to come to be enslaved to things so mean and worthless, to our own so great loss and detriment!" Would you see the loss? says St. Bernard. "We have despised the world and all things in it; we have left our parents, relations, and friends; we have shut ourselves up in monasteries and bound ourselves to perpetual imprisonment, to be ever under lock and key and a doorkeeper; we have given up our own wills and bound ourselves ever to follow the will of another. What should we not be ready to do, not to lose so many great merits!"

CHAPTER VI

Of Three Degrees of Poverty

THE saints and masters of spiritual life lay down three degrees of poverty. The first is that of those who outwardly have left the things of the world, but not inwardly; they have not left them with their will, but remain attached to them. Of such we have already said that they are not truly poor, but pretenders to poverty, and falsely bear the name of religious. The second degree of poverty is of those who have left all things in effect and will, and also here in

religion have given up affection for superfluities, but hold strongly by necessary things. They take care that nothing be wanting to them of which they stand in need. They like to be well served all round, in food, dress, lodging, and everything else, and when anything is wanting there, they resent it and complain. That is not perfect poverty. St. Bernard says very well: "It is a sad thing to see how many there are today who glory in the name of poverty, but wish to be poor on such terms as never to be short of anything, but to have everything well up to the mark. This is not poverty but riches, and indeed riches so great as even rich folk in the world have not." For they suffer many inconveniences in these things, sometimes for not getting all they want; at other times, to save expense, they suffer more than we do for love of virtue; at other times, though they have the money and spend it, they do not succeed in making their servants do everything to their taste. And you a religious, you who profess poverty and have made a vow of the same, you want never to feel the pinch of necessity or suffer anything! This is not being a lover of poverty, but a lover of your own conveniences and of having all things up to the mark. There in the world perhaps you would have had much more to go without. It is not right that here in religion, where we come to mortify ourselves and do penance, we should seek more comfort and more conveniences than what we had there.

If, then, we wish to attain to the perfection of this poverty of spirit, and realize to the full the name of religious, bringing our life into accordance with the name that we bear, we must endeavor to move on to the third degree of poverty, which is poverty of necessary things; "for he who is truly poor makes little account even of what is necessary"—*vere enim pauper etiam necessaria parvi pendit*. We must give up any affection, not only for things superfluous and useless, but also for necessities, so that in them also we should be poor and show in them an affection and

desire for poverty. And now that we cannot dispense with and abandon them altogether, at least let us take what is "necessary" charily and strictly, reducing it to the narrowest compass we can, rather than extending it and giving it liberal measure, rejoicing always to suffer something herein for love of poverty. A saint says it is only then praiseworthy to be a poor man when, besides being very poor, one loves the poverty one suffers and rejoices in it and gladly bears the shortages that go with it for love of Christ. He, then, who wishes to see whether he is poor in spirit and is advancing in that virtue, should see whether he rejoices in the effects of poverty and her friends and companions, which are hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, nakedness. See whether you rejoice in an old garment and a patched shoe; see whether you rejoice when you miss something at table and they forget you, or things are not served so much to your taste; see whether you rejoice when your room is not so comfortable; for if you do not rejoice in these things and love them not, but rather shun them, you have not attained to the perfection of poverty in spirit. This point we shall further enlarge upon.

CHAPTER VII

Of Some Means to Arrive at Poverty in Spirit and Preserve Ourselves Therein

IT will aid us much to the attainment of poverty in spirit, and keeping it, if in the first place we attend to what our Father says in his Constitutions: "Let none have the use of anything for his own." He explains this by a comparison. He says that a religious in all that he has the use of should reckon that he is clothed and dressed out like a statue, that makes no resistance when they take its dress off. In this way you should regard the dress that you wear, your book and breviary and everything else that you

use, so that, if they told you to give it up or to exchange with another, you should feel it no more than a statue feels it when they strip it of its clothing. If this be the way you hold it, you do not hold it as your own. But if, when they bid you go out of such a room or give up such an article or exchange it for another, you feel great repugnance and difficulty and are not like the statue, it is a sign that you take the thing for your own, since you feel so aggrieved at the loss of it. Therefore our Father wishes superiors sometimes to prove and test their subjects in the virtue of poverty and in the virtue of obedience, as God tested Abraham, that they may see what virtue each one has and give him occasion to grow more and more in it. It is an excellent way of testing us and a means very appropriate to the end we are speaking of, to deprive us of what we have and make us accept something else instead. Speaking of affection for these things of earth, St. Augustine says: "When we have a thing, we often think we do not care for it; but when they offer to take it away from us, then we come to know what we are." If, when you part with a thing or they offer to take it away from you, you feel repugnance and difficulty, and perhaps hesitate about giving it up, it is a sign that you are attached to it, since grief and feeling hurt arise from attachment. St. Augustine says: "When it gives us no pain or trouble to part with a thing, it is a sign that we are not attached to it and have no affection for it; but when it is a pain and grief to leave it, it is a sign of the presence of such affection." It is, therefore, an excellent practice of superiors from time to time to exercise us in these things, making us change rooms and move from a room in which perhaps we were very comfortable and very fond of it; or making us part with a book or exchange an article of clothing, that we may not get any prescriptive right to anything; otherwise, a certain sense of proprietorship may come in little by little and undermine this firm wall of poverty. So we read that this practice was very

much in use amongst those ancient Fathers, to the end that their religious might not get an affection for things or regard them as their own.

We read that this is how St. Dorotheus acted with his disciple St. Dositheus. He would give him a garment or vest and make him sew and trim it very neatly, and then, when he had fitted it nicely to his own size, he would take it from him and give it to another. This book of St. Dorotheus is very much in accordance with our manner of proceeding and descends to many minute particulars. It is related there that St. Dositheus was infirmarian, and one time set his heart on a knife, and asked for one from St. Dorotheus, not for himself, but for use in the infirmary. St. Dorotheus said to him: "Do you like the knife, Dositheus? Which would you prefer, to be a slave to this knife or a servant of Christ? Are you not ashamed that this bit of steel shall lord it over you?" Oh, how many times might we say that to ourselves! Are you not ashamed that a trifle like this should be your master and drag and twirl you about? So he said to him: "Never touch it again." And he never did touch it again. Let us not take these things for pieces of childishness or things of little importance. St. Jerome says admirably well in a similar case: "To those who do not understand the meaning of virtue, and have not attained to the perfection and purity thereof, perhaps these things will appear a nursery game and of small importance. But they are not; they are points of great perfection and holy wisdom, hidden from the wise and prudent of the world, and revealed and manifested to the humble and simple of heart."

The second thing that will help to preserve us in poverty of spirit is not to have anything superfluous. This is a special point in which the Lord has shown peculiar favor to us in the Society; for our rooms are like that which Holy Scripture says the Sunamite woman prepared for the holy Prophet Eliseus. The prophet often passed by her house,

and she said to her husband: *Let us make him a little chamber, and put in it a bed and a table and a chair and a candlestick, that when he comes to us he may lodge there* (IV Kings iv. 9-10). That should be the furniture of our rooms; a bed, a table, a chair, and a candlestick; only what is necessary. It is not our custom nor are we anywise allowed to have cells furnished with pictures, portraits, and the like, nor to keep in them spare chairs, nor an elaborate writing desk, nor a carpet, nor a curtain in front of the door; nor can we keep in our cell a little jam or any other delicacy wherewith to regale ourselves, or to comfort and entertain those who visit us. Even to get a drink of water we have to ask leave and go to the refectory; nor may we have a book in which we are allowed to make a mark, or carry the book away with us. Undeniably this is great poverty; but it goes along with great relief and great perfection, for these things beyond a doubt take up much of a religious' time and get in his way, since the having of them and keeping of them and adding to them clearly must cost care and distraction. The not being allowed to have such things (as they are not allowed amongst us) puts an end to all those inconveniences.

One of the reasons why in the Society outsiders are not allowed to come into our rooms, besides other undesirable consequences that such entry would lead to, is because our poverty can thus be better preserved. For, after all, we are men, and if the knight, the merchant, the literary man, whose confessions we hear, were to come into our room, I do not know whether we should have virtue enough to be satisfied with the poverty that reigns there, but we should like to keep it better furnished with books, that from my books at least he might take me for a learned man and a very consequential person. Thus this rule is a great help to keep us in our poverty and hinder us from having superfluities, and we should highly esteem it accordingly, and see that it is kept up.

Another good means to preserve ourselves in this holy poverty, and a very praiseworthy practice, is that of some religious, to carry off to their superior all their little things that they call their pets, and dispossess themselves of them, though they be things that they might keep lawfully and in conformity with obedience. It is told in the chronicles of the Order of St. Jerome that at their beginning this usage was quite common, and so much care was taken that no religious should have anything superfluous or curious that, when there was found in the possession of anyone any article that was curious and not religious, they all met in chapter and made a great fire in the middle, and there they burned it, for these holy men said that such things were the idols of religious. Now this is what we ought to imitate; all things that are not necessary we should banish from our cells and rid ourselves of them entirely, taking them and offering them to the superior without any hope of their ever coming back. And to do that it is not necessary that we should have any affection for them; it is enough that they are superfluous.

St. Bonaventure adds another remark, that he did not approve of our keeping such little things, as some do, to give to others as prizes, or to win them over, or under color of devotion; because, after all, these things take up the heart and are a cause of distraction. Besides, it is making ourselves singular and marked off from the rest, because it seems that this is the man in the house who keeps a shop for these things and to whom all ought to have recourse. There is also, says the saint, another disadvantage in the practice, which is that often these things are given away without leave, sometimes without looking into the matter, sometimes out of shame of having recourse to the superior about these childish gewgaws. So it comes at times that others also receive them without leave, for not daring to say no and put the giver to the blush; and this is a cause of disedification on one side, and scruple and

remorse on the other. There is this further undesirable result, that these gifts and little presents are wont to foment particular friendships and familiarities, to the prejudice of union and fraternal charity. For these reasons, says St. Bonaventure, such doings do not meet with the approval of our elders. And so it is also in our order, because, though this is permitted in some by reason of their ministries, in others, however, we well know that it does not please superiors nor edify our brethren. A religious ought to be so poor as to have nothing to give. And this is what edifies; while those who are fond of having little things to give away neither edify nor are well thought of; and that is the reason why in this matter we follow the counsel of St. Bonaventure.

It will also help much to our purpose to bring forward one thing in which the virtue of holy poverty shines out greatly, and by the blessing of the Lord is well practised in the house; it is that we do not keep our rooms locked, and no one without special leave of the superior can have a writing desk, or box, or anything else locked; all is open to the superior's eyes. Thus, in the very way in which we hold what we do hold and use, we seem to say: "There, take it if you will." St. Jerome insists on this point. "Let there be no need of keys, that from the very exterior look of things it may be shown that we have no outward possessions but only Jesus"—*Nihil habetur extrinsecum praeter Iesum*.

And while everything is so open and exposed, by the goodness of the Lord, it is quite safe as regards those of the house. That we might observe this regulation with facility and security, our Father has laid down in the first place a rule, that none shall enter another's room without leave of the superior. That is one lock, or key, whereby our room is like to be better secured than by a key of iron. He laid down also another rule, that no one should take anything out of another's room without leave of the supe-

rior. That is another strong lock and key. And above all this the seal is set by the vow of poverty, again a very strong fastening. With these three locks and keys so strong, our room and all its contents, for all its being left open, is better secured, so far as the inmates of the house are concerned, than if it were closed with gates and bars of iron. And we should all make an effort that it may remain so, and continue in future times. He would be worthy of heavy punishment who by his audacious violation of the rule should anywise impair the plainness, simplicity, and perfection which mark the Society's manner of life, or risk any alteration in a thing so holy and in such a brilliant display of the virtue of holy poverty. Against such offenders St. Basil and St. Bonaventure inveigh strongly in good round terms.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Another Means That Will Greatly Help Us to Attain Poverty in Spirit and Keep Us in the Same

IT will also be a great help to us to preserve us in poverty in spirit and attain the perfection thereof, not only to rid ourselves of superfluous things, but to take care, even in necessary things, which we are obliged to make use of, to make the virtue of poverty conspicuous, that in all things we may appear poor men, as we are. Our Father commends this to us in his Constitutions. "Let the diet, dress, and sleeping accommodation be such as becomes poor men, and let each one persuade himself that the worst things in the house will be given to him for his greater abnegation and spiritual profit." And in another place he says: "Let all love poverty as a mother and, according to the measure of holy discretion, in proper season let them feel some effects of it." Our holy Father would have us desire the poorer and the worse, but he would not have us evaporate

wholly in desires, but sometimes feel indeed the effects of poverty.

Thus, though the necessities of life be not wanting to you, you have always room in this matter to give proof of the virtue of holy poverty. And not content with saying this in general once or twice over, he afterwards, in the Sixth Part of the Constitutions, sets himself expressly to declare what our clothes are to be like. That they should be, on the one hand, religious and suitable to our ministries, and at the same time conformable to the poverty we profess, he says that these things are to be observed in them: first, that they be decent, because we are religious; secondly, that they fall in with the usage of the country in which we live, because our manner of life is common as to the exterior; thirdly, that they be not contrary to poverty; and he declares there that they would be contrary to poverty if they were made of very costly cloth. Therefore, though parents, relations, friends, and penitents were anxious to give a religious fine cloth, he must not have his clothes made thereof, because they would not be the clothes of a poor man, nor in accordance with our Constitutions. Some say that it is a saving to have one's clothes made of good material, because it lasts twice or three times as long, and so makes for poverty. But these are fleshly and worldly reasons. It is much more important that poverty be conspicuous in the clothes we wear, and that we look like poor men, and go about dressed as poor men, for such we are; this, I say, is more important than any amount of saving. Further, not only in the quality of the cloth, but also in the cut of the coat, poverty should be well marked. If one selected a garment very full, ample, and dignified, it would not be the habit of a poor religious. There are two things only that our Father would have us make account of in dress, proper decency and protection against cold, for to these two objects were clothes instituted and that is their end. It is the doctrine of St. Basil, who quotes to

this effect the saying of St. Paul: *Having food and wherewith to be covered, with that we are content* (I Tim. vi. 8). Let us be content with having food to sustain us and clothes to cover us. A holy man observes: See what he says: *food, not dainties and delicacies*; and see what he says, *clothes wherewith to be covered, not to look smart*. We should be content with bare necessities; and for the rest, all that savors of dignity and ostentation should be banished from religious life and nowise tolerated, since it is vanity and profanity. Let all that be cast out; let not the world come upon us here.

Oh, how the glorious St. Francis dreaded that even in his order! It is related in their chronicles that Friar Elias, a leading man in the order, who became minister general, had a habit made for himself, full and ample, with long sleeves, and of costly stuff. St. Francis called him in the presence of many friars and told him to lend him the habit that he wore. The saint put it on over his own, making proper folds of the train and arranging the hood and turning up the sleeves with gestures of vanity, and so began to march about with his head high and his chest thrown out, stepping out with a fine pontifical strut and saluting the friars present in a deep sonorous voice: "God save you, gallant gentlemen!" The religious stood staring with astonishment at what the saint did and said. That done, in a transport of fervor and zeal, he hastily pulled off the habit and in utter scorn flung it far from him, and said to Friar Elias in the hearing of them all: "The bastard sons of the order are clad in that fashion." So he stood up in his habit, humble and unostentatious, straight and short, and resuming his air of cheerfulness and mildness, he began to talk to his friars with great humility and familiarity, teaching them entire meekness, poverty, and humility.

Let us not, then, be bastard sons of our order, but legitimate sons, in all things like to our mother, holy poverty. Our clothes should be in the style of the poor; poverty

should be conspicuous in them and show that we are poor men. And to that end they should be even less than what we might decently wear, and even less than what the opinion of the world might think necessary for us. He cannot be called poor in dress whose dress is abundantly complete in all that can be called necessary; he shows no sign of being a poor man to whom no detail of what is necessary is wanting. That is why we said above that perfect poverty meant rejoicing in having to suffer and endure some flaw and shortcoming even in the supply of things necessary, and that he who had no mind to suffer and endure any want had not attained to the perfection of poverty in spirit.

What is said of clothes must be understood of all other things of which we have the use. We must take care that the virtue of holy poverty is apparent in them all, and that it may easily be seen that we are poor men. Thus in our room we should not keep anything but what is necessary, and that of the meanest; the poorest table, the most tumble-down bed; the worst furniture in the house you must covet to have for yourself; and as for books that are not quite necessary, off with them to the library, and do not make a parade of learning by piling up books in your room. St. Bonaventure enters into minute details here, earnestly charging religious to keep only necessary things and with them taking care that they be not works of art, but rough, what will just do, old and mended. Do not look to it that your books be very well bound, or that your breviary or *Horae Diurnae* be a curiosity of workmanship or a thing of singular elegance. Do not carry about with you curious pictures, nor a rosary of any considerable worth and value; and if you do have any *Agnus Dei* or any cross or reliquary for your own devotion, let it be conformable to the poverty that we profess; and the poorer you are in this respect, the more pleasing you will be to God and His saints.

The blessed St. Francis used to say that to keep curious and unnecessary things was a sign of a dead spirit. When

the spirit is tepid, and the ardor of grace has died down, with what can it cover and entertain itself, he says, but with these trifling things? As it finds no comfort in spiritual things, it seeks it in these outward objects of interest. This is a great truth, well borne out by experience; and that is why our superiors make so much account of these small things, for one reason, because they touch poverty, and for another, because there is no life of the spirit where one busies himself with the like things. And even in necessary things, as we have said, we ought to be poor and appear so, and be glad to suffer some diminution in them, the better to imitate Christ our Lord, Who, being rich and powerful, made Himself poor for love of us (II Cor. viii. 9) and chose to suffer such lack of necessary things, suffering hunger, thirst, cold, weariness, and nakedness. St. Bernard says: "In heaven there was great abundance of good things and riches, but no poverty was to be found there. Here on earth there was great abundance of that commodity, but men did not know its worth and value. What, then, did the Son of God do? As a wise merchant His heart went out to that commodity and He took in a store of it, that so men might know and value it and also take in a store of it, seeing that it is worth so much in the kingdom of heaven."

CHAPTER IX

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the book of the illustrious men of the Cistercian Order there is a story of the abbot of a monastery in Saxony who was not content to clothe himself with the cloth of the neighborhood, but sent every year to Flanders for pieces of fine costly cloth and clothed himself therewith. When the abbot died the monks divided his clothes among them, and the prior of the monastery took for himself one of his tunics and put it on, one solemn night, in honor of the

solemnity of the feast. But no sooner had he done so than he felt as though they were applying plates of hot iron to his flesh, and began to cry out that he was burning, and flung the garment off at once, and all saw that it sent out sparks of fire, as though it were a red-hot iron. Astonished and dismayed at this, all those who had taken any of father abbot's clothes brought them at once to the spot and made a heap of them; and there began to come out and rise sparks of fire in all directions, as from a burning furnace. This went on long enough for them to be able to give notice to all the neighboring abbots, and they came and bore witness to this so fearful judgment of God.

Caesarius relates how a knight having done many wrongs to a Benedictine community in France, the religious determined to dispatch a monk to King Philip to complain of the wrongs they suffered. They chose for their envoy a young monk of noble family, hoping that the king would give him favorable audience for the sake of his high connections. Coming into the king's presence, he said to him: "There is a man who has done great injuries to our monastery, and I beg your highness to restrain him and make him restore the goods he has taken away." The king eyed him, and his habit and appearance, and asked him who he was, and learned that he was the son of a well-known knight. He led the conversation to other subjects until the monk said to him: "Sire, the truth is that this knight has carried off all that we had in the house and left us little or nothing." The king replied: "That may easily be seen in your shoes, which would not have been so pinched if he had left you a little leather. As you are more nobly born than the rest, you ought to be more humble." Wishing, thereupon, to soothe him, he added: "Take not my warning ill; I do it for your good. Return home, and I will make sure that this person gives you no more trouble." A similar story is told by Caesarius of another Philip, King of the Romans, who gave the same answer to a Cistercian abbot who was

talking to him about the needy condition of his community. The king, looking at the shoes he wore, very close-fitting and tight, said to him: "It is quite evident that your house is very poor from the way you are shod, since even leather is dear." Whereat the abbot was much annoyed.

It is related of the blessed St. Francis in his chronicles, that a guardian, very intimate with the holy father, founded an oratory for the friars hard by which he made a cell, a little way apart, in which the saint could stay and make his prayer. The cell was of timber, worked with an adz only. When Father St. Francis came to the place, they took him to the cell, and Father St. Francis said: "Brother, if you wish me to dwell in this cell, make within it a lining of osiers and branches of some trees, that I may see in them poverty." And when that was done, he stayed in the cell for some days.

Of our Father Francis Borgia we read in his Life that in all things he showed himself a truly poor man and a perfect lover of this virtue. It appeared in his dress, food, bed, and lodging, and even in very minute things, as in the paper that he used for his sermons, in the fire that was made for him in a case of necessity, and like things, so much so that he could never be prevailed on to accept new shoes or new stockings. They once tried to play a trick upon him, putting new shoes in the place of the old ones before he got up, but it availed them nothing. When he went begging alms, he ate with more relish the scraps and bits of bread that he or others brought in preference to the whole loaves that were put on the table. On his journeys, though they were ever so long and laborious, or his health ever so weak, he would not allow of there being carried with him a clean pair of sheets for his personal use, fearing that this might be to the prejudice of holy poverty. He often slept in barns upon the bare tiles in cold weather, with the wind coming in in many directions, and that with such cheerfulness and rejoicing as to strike amazement and

shame into his companions. His overcoat and raincloak, in winter as in summer, was his mantle, doubled and lined inside, to keep it from wearing out. It was the greatest difficulty imaginable to get him to wear high boots, or other defense against the rain. He would say that a broad-brimmed hat was protection enough against sun and rain. Besides, it often happened that he came to inns, soaked through with water and pierced with cold, and great was his joy, when he arrived in that condition, to find that there was no good accommodation at the inn. In no sickness, and in no weather, however severe and cold, would he allow any curtain to be fastened about his bed or in his room; he thought it a great luxury to have a little mat fastened at the head of his bed. All this was the more pleasing and admirable in him, considering the high estate he had left in the world.

CHAPTER X

To What and How a Religious Is Bound by the Vow of Poverty

IT remains to say to what the vow of poverty binds us in strictness, and when one would sin against it, and when it would be a mortal sin, for it is reasonable for a religious to understand the obligation he is under by being such, and by reason of the vow that he has made. At other times we treat of matters of perfection; here we will treat of what is of obligation, which must always come first and is, as it were, the foundation on which all the rest is built. We will gather together with all possible brevity what the doctors say on this point, as well theologians as jurists, drawn from the canon law and the writings of the saints.

The vow of poverty of itself binds a religious to have no dominion nor ownership, nor the use of any temporal thing without the lawful permission of the superior. This is the

common opinion of all the doctors and is expressly laid down in the sacred canons. Hence it follows, first, that a religious is bound by his vow of poverty not to hold, or possess, or give, or take, or receive any temporal thing to keep, or use, or dispose of it, without leave of his superior, because all these are the acts of one who is, or may be, proprietor or owner of the thing; and so he who should act thus would act against the vow of poverty. This is the inference and assertion of all the doctors, and is expressed and declared in the sacred canons.

Secondly, it follows that not only would a religious act against his vow of poverty by taking, or retaining, or giving away, or disposing of anything of the house without leave of the superior, but also by receiving anything from outsiders, relations, friends, or penitents, and retaining or disposing of it without leave of the superior. This is also the common opinion of the doctors, and is laid down in the canon law as a thing certain.

These are the principles and foundations of all this matter, and upon them we shall rest all that is to be said, drawing conclusions from these principles in resolution of particular cases that may occur.

Our Father in his Constitutions, dealing with this matter, puts before us and explains it all; and it is drawn out in the Rules that we may have it before our eyes. It is said in the Twenty-sixth Rule: "Let all understand that they cannot lend, or take, or dispose of anything in the house without the superior's knowledge and consent." And that no one might think that the only thing against poverty was taking or disposing of anything in the house without leave of the superior, but as for receiving from persons outside, or disposing of what was received from them, without leave, such a proceeding would not be against the vow of poverty, he further enforces this second point in another rule: "No one shall take to himself anything of the house, or from the room of another, or receive anything in any way from an

extern, whether for himself or for another, without leave of the superior." In these rules our Father briefly sums up what is that to which our vow of poverty binds us in all rigor.

But we must here observe that none should fall into the mistake of thinking that it is no sin—or at least no mortal sin—to break these rules, on the ground that our Constitutions and Rules do not bind under sin. A man might deceive himself in this way, saying: "I quite see that one acts against the rule by receiving anything from another or giving anything; but as our Rules do not bind under sin, I do not think that it would be a sin, but only the breaking of a rule." It is true that our Rules and Constitutions do not bind under sin, as our Father declares in the same Constitutions (p. vi. cap. 5), but the vows that we take do clearly bind under sin, and that sin is mortal of its own nature. And so our Father declares, that no one may pretend ignorance or take occasion to err, although the thing is clear in itself. As a religious who should violate chastity would sin mortally against the vow he had taken thereof, and that would be a new sacrilege, so he who should violate the vow of poverty would sin mortally against his vow of poverty. Of that there can be no doubt. It was in your power to have remained where you were in the world with your property, and used it at your discretion, and not to enter religion, nor make any vow of poverty. But now that you have entered and made that vow it is no longer in your power to receive a shilling, or keep it without leave, because you are bound to that by the vow you have made.

This is what the Apostle St. Peter in the Acts said to Ananias and Sapphira, who had made a vow of poverty, as the saints observe, and had sold an inheritance that they had, and then, in bringing the price to the feet of the apostles as the others did, kept and reserved for themselves a part of the price, and said that they had not sold it for more than they presented. St. Peter said: *Ananias, why*

hath Satan tempted thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the land? Remaining, did it not remain to thee; and sold, was it not in thy power? Thou hast not lied to man but to God (Acts v. 3). And God's chastisement fell upon him immediately; he fell down suddenly dead, and the like happened presently to his wife, who had shared in the offense; and great fear fell upon the whole Church, and upon all who heard these things (Acts v. 11). So it is reasonable that great fear should fall upon us of doing anything against the vow of poverty, seeing that it is punished so vigorously.

Now, coming back to the point, I say that if there were nothing more than a rule there, the breaking of it would not be a sin; but when the Constitutions or Rules contain and declare the matter of a vow, they express an obligation under sin, not by any force of their own to bind you under sin, but by reason of the obligation of the vow that binds in that way. It is as when rules contain and declare any matter of chastity or natural law; they tell of an obligation under sin, not by virtue of the rule, but by the obligation which chastity or the natural law of itself carries with it. And because these rules tell and declare the substance of the vow of poverty, and what it is to which the vow binds of itself; therefore, he who breaks these rules will sin, not by breaking the rule, but by breaking the vow of poverty which the rule declares. So the having of these rules before our eyes should not serve to give us occasion to think that it is only a rule, but to let us know from the outset that we have here a summary and abridgment of the substance of the vow of poverty, and of what it binds us to in all rigor, drawn from the canon law and all the doctors, as we have said. St. Augustine says, speaking of religious who live in community: "It is certain that they ought to have nothing, possess nothing, give or receive nothing, without the superior's leave," which is our rule letter for letter. This, then, it is to be poor; and

for one to be able of his own will, without leave from another, to take, or give, or hold, or dispose of anything, is to be a proprietor, and, consequently, against the vow of poverty.

That this, which must be taken as a first principle in this matter, may be better understood, it must be observed that the distinction which doctors, theologians, and jurists draw between use and dominion—between being the owner of a thing and having only the use of it—is that the owner of a thing can commonly do what he likes with it. He can give it to whom he likes, lend it, sell it, spend, or dispose of it as he thinks good. But he who is not absolute owner, but has only the use of the thing, cannot dispose of it as he likes; he cannot give it to another, nor sell it, nor alienate it, but only use it for the purpose for which it was granted him. They illustrate this by an example. When one man invites another to dinner, he only gives him leave to eat there in the dining room of all that is put before him, but he does not make him master of the viands laid on the table. He cannot carry them off to his house, nor send them to another friend, nor sell them, nor make of them what he likes; he has only the use of them to eat on the spot what he wishes; and, therefore, they say that use is distinguished from dominion, even in things that are consumed by use, and that the first use. In this relation doctors say that private religious stand, even as regards those things which they have with leave of their superiors. The only thing allowed them is the use of those things, to avail themselves of them and benefit by them. But it is clear that you cannot give to another the habit and dress that you wear, without leave of the superior, because it is not yours; and if you were to give it without leave, you would act against the vow of poverty, because that would be making yourself absolute master of the thing, since you do with it what you will. And what I say of this is to be understood of all the other things that we have; you cannot give another your

breviary, nor your writing case, nor your hat, without leave of the superior, since nothing of that is yours; they have granted you the use of it only for yourself, as in the case of a guest invited to dinner. Let us always remember that example, since it is very proper and illustrates the matter well. And if of the things which a religious has with leave for his own use we say that he cannot do what he likes with them, nor give them to others, it is clear that still less can he give, take, or dispose of other things of the house without leave of the superior, in the way of taking anything from the clothesroom, library, refectory, dispensary, or other place, either to give to another or for his own private use; that would be still more clearly against poverty.

CHAPTER XI

*Explaining How It Is against the Vow of Poverty to
Receive or Give Anything without Leave of the
Superior, Even though the Thing Be
Not Belonging to the House*

WE have said that it is the common opinion of doctors that not only is it against the vow of poverty to take anything of the house for your own use, or give it to another, without leave, but also to receive anything from another without leave of the superior. Thus, if a friend, or penitent, or your father, or relation, gives you anything to buy a coat or a book or anything of the sort, and you receive and keep or use it without leave of the superior, you will sin against the vow of poverty, whether you ask for it or he gives it you without your asking, either by way of friendship, or by way of alms or relationship, or in any other way that you shall direct. But someone will say: "When the thing belongs to the house, I quite agree that it will be against the vow of poverty; but when it is given me by another, how can it be so? I take nothing from the

house, nor put it to any loss; rather it seems I do it a good turn, saving it the cost of what otherwise it would have to give me. What sin is there there, and against what commandment?" I say that ordinarily it is a sin of theft, and against the Seventh Commandment of the law of God. And so St. Augustine says expressly in his rule: "If anyone wishes to give anything to a religious, if a father wishes to give his son some clothing or anything else, the religious cannot receive it without leave, but the superior is the person to receive it, and that not for the individual, but for the house and community, to give it to whomsoever he thinks stands most in need of it." If the superior thinks fit to give to another the clothing that was sent to you, he does you no wrong, since it is not yours. Coming into the house, it becomes common property; it is as much mine as yours. To come to the point, St. Augustine goes on to say: "And if anyone receives anything without leave, and keeps it covered up without giving an account of it to the superior, let him be condemned as guilty of theft." "For theft it is," says St. Basil, "to keep anything in private without leave of the superior." From whom is the thing stolen? Would you know from whom? St. Basil will tell you: "From your order and the community."

And let no one say that these are exaggerations of the saints, their usual way of talking, enhancing the matter in order to strike more terror and alarm into those whom they rebuke. It is not so; it is very plain truth and the common opinion of all the doctors, based on the principle, in which all agree, that a religious by his vow of poverty is incapacitated for holding anything as his own or giving anything away. As he is not his own, but belongs to his order, so all that they give him, when it comes under his hands, in whatsoever form it comes, at once becomes the property of his order. When a religious holds a chair or pension, such as we see are held at Salamanca and other universities, the revenues do not belong to the religious, but

to his monastery; and the superior collects them, and the procurator in his name, as he does the other revenues of the monastery; and the religious who fills the chair has recourse to his superior for necessities, just as he would if he did not hold the chair.

Hence it is very clear that it is theft for a religious to receive anything from another and retain it without leave of his superior; because the thing then belongs to the order when it comes into the hands of the religious; and so, if he keeps and retains it without leave, he usurps and steals from the order, acting contrary to the will of the superior. That is the definition of theft—to take or retain of another's goods contrary to the will of the owner. Hence it follows that, if a religious gives anything to another without leave, though it be by way of alms, the receiver acquires no dominion or ownership over it, but is obliged to restore it to the order. Hence it will be seen what a mistake it is to think that you can give to your relation or penitent or friend, a book, a picture, a reliquary, or anything of the sort, on the ground that it is not the house or order that gave it you, but another party. As it is a theft and an offense against the vow of poverty to take or give or dispose of anything of the house without leave of the superior, so also is it the like sin to take and receive anything from an outsider, and keep or dispose of it without leave of the superior.

But it must be observed that, though it were not a theft, and no wrong were done thereby to house or monastery or any other party, as might happen in some case, nevertheless it remains a mortal sin of its own kind to take or receive, use or dispose of any temporal thing without leave of the superior, because by the vow of poverty this is forbidden to the religious, and he is rendered incapable of such an act. And the recipient of such a thing from a religious would acquire no ownership of it, and would be bound to restore it, because he receives from one who cannot give, like one who receives from a minor.

In confirmation, there is a case related by Pope St. Gregory in his "Dialogues" (iv. 55). And the case was of this sort. In the monastery of St. Andrew, which St. Gregory built at Rome when he was pope, there was a monk called Justus. He asked a brother that he had in the world to buy him a woollen shirt. The brother put his hand into his purse and drew out three reals, and said to him: "There you see three reals; buy one to your taste." So Surius tells the story and says that he drew it from the original; but in the "Dialogues" of St. Gregory it is said to have been three ducats; but to our purpose it comes to the same thing whether they were reals or ducats, and at that time three reals were enough, and more than enough, to buy a woollen shirt. Anyhow, the monk took the three reals, or the three ducats, without leave, and kept them. He came to fall seriously ill. Another monk, happening to know that he was keeping those three reals and being uneasy in conscience about it, went to acquaint the abbot—according to the rule which we also have, that whoever knows anything serious about another must at once acquaint the superior therewith. The abbot thought the case so grave that the pope ought to be consulted about it; so he reported to St. Gregory, to see what was to be done. St. Gregory ordered that none of the monks were to visit the sick man, nor speak to him, but all should hold him for excommunicate, since he had broken his vow of poverty. He further ordered that when he died they were not to bury him with the other monks in consecrated ground, but outside the monastic enclosure, in a dunghill, and that they were to throw on his corpse the money that he was keeping, saying all aloud: *Thy money be with thee unto perdition* (Acts viii. 20). The monk died of that illness, and they did with him accordingly. St. Gregory says that this example struck such horror and alarm into the monastery that all the monks started rummaging their cells, and all the little things that they had, even with leave, and things that they might have kept

lawfully, they took to their superior, to be sure of having nothing against poverty. By these and the like examples of the ancient Fathers, there was established this penalty by the sacred canons against religious who died proprietors.

CHAPTER XII

Coming Down to Particular Cases of Certain Things Contrary to the Vow of Poverty

IN the first place I say, and infer from what has been said, that, if the superior here in the house gives a religious money for his journey, he cannot out of that money buy rosaries or pictures or anything else, either for himself or to give to another, nor can he get his Agnus Dei or his reliquary mended, even though he subtracts from his food or saves what he might have otherwise spent. The reason is that the money is given him solely for his expenses on the way; and what he does not spend on that, however little it be, he must return to the superior who sent him or to the other superior of the place where he goes; and if he keeps it or spends it on anything else, he will be defrauding his order and sin against the vow of poverty. This is to be understood when the order gives the religious all that he needs for his journey, as is done in our Society. It would be another case if they gave him a determined and fixed sum, so much for each day, so that, though he needed more, they would not give it him; because then that would be a sign of an express or tacit or interpretative leave, enabling him to spend on other lawful things anything that he may save from what they give him.

Secondly, I say the same, though the journey-money is not given him by his order, but by parent, relation, or penitent. He cannot buy with it a breviary, or a spectacle case, or a pair of spectacles, or anything else, either for himself or to give away. Let no one deceive himself in this matter

by saying: "This money was not given me by my order, but by my relation or friend;" for it does not matter whether your order has given it you, or your relation or friend, since in coming into your hands it is made over to your order, and is as though the superior or the procurator of the house had given it you. And so you cannot spend it except on that for which the superior gave it, that is, for your journey; and all that you have over, in whatsoever manner it be so, you must return to the superior; and if you spend it on anything else, or keep it, you sin against the vow of poverty, and are as though you had stolen it from your order. And this I say even in the case where one has received that money for his journey with leave of the superior; for if he had received it without leave, he would already have broken his vow of poverty by doing that.

Thirdly, it is the same when a man comes from a mission or from a visit to his relations, and there they have given him something, some article to ease him on his journey or some further article of clothing. When it comes into his hands, it becomes common property, and on reaching the house he must hand it over to the superior, or to the clothesroom in his name; and if he keeps it without leave, he will make himself a proprietor and commit a sin of theft against the vow of poverty.

Fourthly, though a religious be on his way to another house or college and has already his foot in the stirrup, he cannot ask or receive anything from any extern, not even for his journey-money, without leave of his present superior, though he understands that the other superior of the place to which he is going would be glad of it, as saving him the cost. The reason is because the one is at present his superior, and not the other, and so he would be receiving it without leave of his superior, having that superior present, as he is present, and being able to ask him. It would be another case if the traveler were away from the

house and had no other superior of whom to ask leave; for in that case he might well receive what he understood to be according to the will of his superior, with the intention of declaring and giving an account of it as soon as he arrived at the house; for then he would be presuming the consent of his superior, a consent not to be presumed when there is an opportunity of having recourse at once to the superior or when the matter easily admits of delay.

Fifthly, it follows also from what has been said that, if the superior gives any religious leave to receive any money and keep it in the custody of the procurator for any definite purpose, as to get some writings copied, he cannot spend it on anything else without leave of the superior. Nor can he give a sixpence out of this money to any other religious of the house for any need that may occur, either his own, or that of some penitent or relation or friend, either by way of alms, for prizes of rosaries or pictures or anything else whatever, nor can the other receive it without leave; but both the one and the other in such a case would act against the vow of poverty, since it is against that vow to give or receive or dispose of anything temporal without the superior's leave.

Sixthly, as a religious cannot give or take without leave of the superior, so neither can he lend or receive a loan, for every sort of contract is forbidden him by the vow of poverty; although in little things and things of frequent occurrence he may presume himself to have a tacit or general leave to lend to another religious of the same house things that he has with leave, at least for a short time, more or less, as the use and practice of the order shall declare.

Seventhly, a religious will sin against the vow of poverty if, without the superior's leave, he receives a deposit from any person outside the house or within; for a deposit is a true contract and carries a liability of its own to the effect that the religious who charges himself with the deposit is bound to render an account of it and pay up if it be lost by

any fault of his, legally investigated. There is also the embarrassment and anxiety that another man's money or other precious article carries with it, and the scandal there would be if money were found in the possession of a religious without leave and without its being known what it is. But in ordinary things which a religious has with leave and can keep in his room, the use and practice of the order declares that he may also give them to the custody of another of the house.

Eighthly, as it is against the vow of poverty to receive and keep in one's possession money or anything else that costs money, without leave of the superior, so also is it to keep money or anything that costs money, in the hands of another without the superior's leave; for it comes to the same thing to keep money in the hands of a friend or to keep it in one's own hands. Thus, if a man keeps in the hands of a penitent or friend any article for use for a journey, or any other thing whatsoever, that it may be given him when he goes out of his place of residence, it will be as much against the vow of poverty as if he kept it himself.

Ninthly, it is not in accordance with the poverty that we profess in the Society, rather it savors of ownership, to carry with one books or pictures or other like things, and take them with one when one changes residence. That, therefore, is not allowed in the Society; but all the things that one has are ordered to be inscribed and held for the property of the college or house where one resides, and there must stay when the man changes his residence, and he cannot take them with him. And if he takes them with him, it will be like stealing them from the house to which they were already applied, and so against the vow of poverty; and that although the donor had given them to this particular person and not to the order, for it comes to the same thing, as we have said above.

Tenthly, a religious will sin against the vow of poverty if he spends money on unlawful, vain, or superfluous things,

even though the superior has given him leave for that, for it is forbidden by the vow of poverty, as the sacred canons declare. Not even the superior himself may spend money on such things, so neither may he give leave for it, but only on things necessary, useful, and becoming. Whence it follows that he who should receive such things as a religious had spent his money on ill, would be obliged to restore them to the order, according to what we said in the last chapter.

Eleventhly, it is contrary to the vow of poverty for a religious to keep anything hidden away, that the superior may not find it and take it from him; for, as the doctors observe, that is one way of seeking to appropriate a thing and keep it against the will of the superior.

Twelfthly, if you are a subordinate official to whom has been committed the distribution or disposal of certain things, you cannot do that at your own good pleasure and will, but must adapt yourself to the good pleasure and will of your superior. And to give more or less or worse than what you know to be the will of the superior will be against the vow of poverty, by using and dispensing things as if you were master and owner of them, instead of depending on another.

Thirteenthly, as he would sin against the vow of poverty who should of set purpose waste, or allow to go to waste, the things of the house that he has under his charge or that have been allowed him for his use, so also he will sin against the vow of poverty who wastes them or lets them go to waste by notable fault and carelessness. A gross fault, they say, is equivalent to malice. And the reason of this is, in the first place, that it is proper to him alone who is master of a thing to be able to consume and squander it at his whim; secondly, because the use of things given or entrusted to a religious is granted him solely for the benefit and profit of himself and of his order; and if he squanders and consumes or spends those things without profit, he

will sin against the vow of poverty. And in these things it ought to be observed that, though the loss inflicted on the order each time is small, yet when it is repeated many times it may amount to grave matter.

There is a noteworthy example of this which Cassian relates, taken from the monks of old. One day the dispenser or procurator of the monastery went into the kitchen and saw on the floor three peas, which by chance had fallen from the hands of the cook when he was washing them to get them ready for cooking. He went and told the abbot, who called the cook and gave him a public penance for handling with negligence the goods of the monastery. These holy monks, says Cassian, regarded not only themselves, but all the things of the monastery, as things dedicated and consecrated to God, and so handled them with much care and reverence, no matter how small the thing was.

CHAPTER XIII

An Answer to an Objection Which Throws Much Light on This Matter

BUT someone will say: "There is an appearance of rigorism and excessive severity in this doctrine, since other religious also have their vow of poverty, and yet we see that they do not hesitate to receive from relation, penitent, or friend, money for a breviary and for a writing case, and even for a habit, and they are learned and God-fearing men. They are also wont to give to a friend in the house, or even outside, a book of those that they have, and even other things of greater value, without asking leave for it, and they have no scruple or suspicion that what they do may be against the vow of poverty. It follows that here in our own practice we should not sin against the vow of poverty either by doing the like, but at most against the perfection of it, and against the obedience due to the superior

and to our constitution and rules." This is a very good objection, and therefore we have inserted it here, that by the solution all that has been said and has to be said may be made clear.

I say, then, that it is quite true that in some orders the religious do all these things without scruple, and without sin against the vow of poverty; but it cannot be inferred from thence that we should not sin either in doing the like. Rather, I say, that if we did those things, we should not only act against obedience and against our rules, but also we should sin against the vow of poverty. And the reason of the difference is that in other orders these things are now done with leave of superiors. There is either express leave for it or, at least, a tacit and interpretative, or virtual, leave, which is, as doctors say, when a usage is now commonly established in an order and superiors know and see it, and, having it in their power to gainsay and stop it, they do not gainsay and stop it, but connive at it and let it go on. He who is silent when he might speak and stop what is being done, is reckoned to consent. Silence, they say, gives consent. The religious, then, who has express or tacit leave from his superiors to give or receive or dispose of anything, does not sin against the vow of poverty by acting accordingly. And, therefore, in doing these things many religious do not sin; but the Society is beginning now, and desires to continue, in the strict keeping up of this wall of poverty, so far as by divine grace shall be possible. There is in it no leave for doing these things, neither express nor tacit nor interpretative leave. Rather there is an express usage and practice quite to the contrary, and therefore anyone who should do these things in the Society would sin against the vow of poverty. And other religious also would sin hereby against the vow of poverty if they had not leave for what they do. Nuns also are religious and have made a vow of poverty, and nevertheless they have their pensions out of which they clothe themselves and buy and

do other things, and we set it down as lawful because they do it with leave of their superiors. It is clear that if any of Ours were to do that without lawful permission, he would sin against the vow of poverty. Hence it is not a good argument that the thing is done in other orders, though there are in them learned and holy men, as though that gave any ground for thinking that the same is lawful in our order; for in those orders there is leave, either express or tacit, to do so, and in ours there is not, but a usage and practice to the contrary. And thus these maxims that we have laid down are not scruples or pieces of rigorism, but truths well founded in all strictness in the common teaching of doctors.

St. Bonaventure and Gerson, spiritual and holy men and grave theologians, set down in so many words many of these particular cases that we have mentioned. They reduce all this business of a religious giving or receiving to the question whether he has or has not express or tacit leave from his superior to that effect. If he has it not, they say that he can neither give nor take nor receive anything, and would sin against his vow of poverty in doing so, because thereby he would cease to be a poor man and constitute himself an owner and proprietor by giving, taking, and disposing of a thing as he likes. Gerson puts the case of the procurator or steward of a monastery, who has money to buy things necessary for the community, and he asks whether he would sin against the vow of poverty by buying for himself or another a knife, a spectacle case, or a pair of spectacles, and he even comes down to minute things, as a needle, a quill pen, or a little thread. His answer is that there will be no sin if he does it with leave of his superior, particular or general, express or tacit; but if he does it otherwise, he sins against his vow of poverty; and he says the same of giving anything to an outsider or receiving anything from him. Thus all doctors agree that a religious is bound by his vow of poverty not to have or give or take

or dispose of anything without leave of his superior. And if in any orders it is taken to be lawful for a religious to have small articles or dainties in his cell, and to be able to receive such from friends or relations, or give away and dispose of other such things, it is because in that order there is express or tacit permission thereto; otherwise it would not be lawful, but against the vow of poverty.

Hence follows a thing worth noting, that to be able to give an answer to a religious as to whether he sins and acts against his vow of poverty in this or that particular, it is necessary to know the practice of his order on that point. Otherwise it is impossible to give a sound opinion to the said religious; for many things may be lawful in one order, on account of there being a tacit and interpretative permission thereto, which would not be lawful in another order where there is no such permission.

Hence it follows that, though certain authors say that a religious would not sin against the vow of poverty by receiving money from another to buy books, or the like things, provided that he does not hide his purchases but keeps them open and plain to view, and is prepared in mind to exhibit and give them up if his superior so commands, yet a religious of our Society doing that would sin against his vow of poverty. The authors referred to speak in that way because they judge that there is there a tacit and interpretative permission, and that superiors give themselves out as satisfied with that sort of subjection and resignation. But in the Society there is no manner of tacit and interpretative permission to that effect, but a clearly declared rule to the contrary. The soutane, mantle, and breviary which we use with leave of the superior, we are obliged to hold in this way, with this subjection and dependence on the superior and with this preparedness of mind to give them up if he commands us; otherwise we should sin against the vow of poverty by being proprietors and keeping the article as our own. For receiving anything to buy a soutane or

books or anything of the sort, though afterwards we exhibit the purchase plain to view in our room, and with the readiness aforesaid, there is no manner of permission in the Society, but a tradition and practice quite to the contrary, and so it would be against the vow of poverty. It is a dead certainty that, if the receiving and keeping of things in this manner, without any further permission, were taken to be lawful in the Society, we should all cry out against it in the congregations, and take care to have this side door shut, whereby our poverty might be ruined.

Doctors also make another observation on this matter of tacit and interpretative leave. They say that to enable a religious to give or ask or receive and keep anything, it is not enough that he knows for certain that, if he were to ask leave for it, the superior would grant it at once; as it is not enough to authorize you to go out of the house without leave, or write a letter, that you know for certain that if you did ask leave it would be given you. What is required is that you should know that the superior will be glad, and take it to be all right, for you to give or receive and keep the thing without his leave, and that he will not at all mind your not asking him. That is what is meant by a tacit and interpretative and virtual leave, enabling you to give or receive without asking further leave in particular; and that is what they have in some orders for many things of which we have spoken. But far from there being this acquiescence on the part of superiors in the Society, there is nothing that they desire more than that everything should be authorized under obedience; nothing that they would resent more than anyone's taking the liberty and having the boldness to do any of these things without leave. Thus in the Society we must use different language on this question of poverty, and on other particular questions, from what they use in some other orders. And the same held in other orders at their commencement, and some still keep it up very creditably.

CHAPTER XIV

That the Vow of Poverty Binds under Mortal Sin, and What Quantity Is Enough to Make a Mortal Sin

SOMEONE will ask whether these things which we have said to be against the vow of poverty will always be a mortal sin, or when they will be. We have already said that it is the common opinion of doctors and saints that he who sins against the vow of poverty commits a mortal sin of theft against the Seventh Commandment of the law of God. I say, then, that, as the Seventh Commandment binds under mortal sin *ex genere suo*, as theologians say, that is to say, of its own kind and nature, but by reason of the smallness of the matter the theft may be a venial sin, as the theft of an apple or of a halfpenny, so also the vow of poverty of its own kind binds under mortal sin; but in so light a matter one may break it without committing more than a venial sin. And if you go on to ask what will be considered a notable quantity, so as to amount to mortal sin, that is a question much debated among the doctors on the matter of theft, what quantity should be called "notable," to make the theft a mortal sin; and according to that standard, they say, will be the breach of the vow of poverty. Thus the quantity that will be enough for a mortal sin against the Seventh Commandment will also be "notable" and sufficient for a mortal sin against the vow of poverty.

For the greater elucidation and confirmation of this, some theologians observe that the gravity of this sin is determined by two elements. The first is the fact that the offender appropriates and takes to himself what is another's against the will of its owner; the second is that thereby he breaks a vow made to God. Looking only at the first element, they say a greater quantity seems necessary to make a mortal sin here than in theft, because the thing taken is

not so entirely another's, nor the owner so entirely unwilling as in theft; but looking at the second element, that quantity will be enough for a mortal sin that would be enough for a mortal sin of theft, because the obligation created by the vow of poverty, not to appropriate or take anything against the will of the superior, is much greater than the obligation created by the Seventh Commandment, not to take anything against the will of the owner.

In the case we related above (Chapter XI) from St. Gregory, what that monk had taken, according to Surius' version of the matter (and he says that he drew it from the original) was only three reals [a real was worth about eight cents] and that from his brother, and that for a shirt which his order would have had to give him if the other had not supplied it. Nevertheless, St. Gregory judged that that quantity was enough at that time for a mortal sin, as is seen by the punishment and excommunication wherewith he punished for it. Of moderns who have written in our times [A.D. 1600] some reckon the amount of three reals [twenty-five cents] a notable quantity and sufficient for a mortal sin against the vow of poverty; others say four reals, others five. In the Carthusian Order a much smaller quantity is judged enough for a mortal sin, since they hold it sufficient for the deprivation of ecclesiastical burial and for excommunication, as Navarro observes.

But granting that in the vow of poverty we may allow a little wider license, and that the value of three or four reals [twenty-four cents, or thirty-two cents] is a light matter, and that it would be necessary to go beyond that to amount to a mortal sin, as some would have it, should a religious, a man aiming at perfection, expose himself to these contingencies and risks: "Did what I received, gave, or kept, amount to the quantity sufficient for a mortal sin or not?" "Did it amount to four or to six reals [thirty-two cents, or forty cents]?" Buyers and boys who, when they go to market, appropriate sometimes a halfpenny,

sometimes a farthing, are excused from mortal sin by the "parvity of the matter;" but what religious is there who, if sent to market, could bring himself to appropriate a half-penny, on the plea that it does not amount to more than a venial sin? Now, if you could not bring yourself to do that, but would take it for a sacrilegious and very low trick, neither should you dare to give or receive anything without leave, alleging that it did not amount to a mortal sin, for such giving or receiving is at least equivalent to appropriation. Let us make account of small things, especially in so grave a matter as this, which touches one of the three essential vows of religion, since he who dares to be a defaulter in this, saying that it will not amount to a mortal sin, is in great danger of a mortal breach of the vow of poverty, since covetousness and the desire of having, of giving and receiving, is a strong passion, linked closely to our nature, which has a great liking for the same. So it blinds and deceives to a great extent; and often, though we cannot say for certain that the thing amounted to a mortal sin, we can say for certain that there was doubt of it; and a religious ought to be very far from putting himself in such doubts and risks.

CHAPTER XV

*Whether a Religious Can Receive Money to Lay Out in
Pious Works without Leave of the Superior, and
When He Would Sin Therein against
the Vow of Poverty*

THE Society wishes us to keep such purity and perfection in this matter of poverty, and to be so far from the keeping and command of money, that we have a rule forbidding us to ask or receive anything from our penitents, either to give in alms to the poor, or by way of restitution, or for any other purpose. Thus, though a peni-

tent be bound to restitution and would be glad to give his confessor the means of making it, the confessor cannot receive it nor charge himself therewith without leave of the superior. This rule is founded on high motives of prudence and experience, and the teaching and example of the saints. St. Basil expressly advises this, and Father Francis Xavier insisted on it much, as we read in his Life. And of the blessed St. Hilarion Abbot, St. Jerome relates in his history that, when he had cured a very wealthy man, casting out a legion of devils that he was possessed by, the patient offered him many gifts in gratitude; and as the saint refused to receive them, he importuned him to take them to give to the poor; but the saint answered: "You had better give them yourself, since you go about in towns and know the poor. I have left my own estate; why should I charge myself with yours?" It is our office to counsel these and the like works to our neighbor, but not to be other people's almoners, since that would be no help to our ministrations, but rather a hindrance. The only result would be that the whole house would be full of people seeking relief, and ten porters would not be enough for these applications alone, and the fathers would be taken off from confessions and spiritual ministrations to attend to this. Even the apostles found by experience that they could not attend to this without prejudice to spiritual ministrations of more importance. *It is not right for us to give up preaching the word of God to serve at tables* (Acts vi. 2), to attend to these temporal things. And so they had to choose out sundry persons to make this their occupation that they might be able to give their whole attention to the conversion of souls.

Some think that this distribution of alms is a good way of gaining our neighbor and attaching him to the frequentation of the sacraments. That is a mistake; you lose more than you gain thereby. There are many more complaining and discontented folk than folk who are satisfied with what

you give them. Some complain because you give them nothing, others because they are not given more; they are all grumbling, and go on to tell stories how we are influenced by private partialities and acceptance of persons; they even think that we walk off with a bit for ourselves, and apply all we can to feathering our own nest. This is not a good way to entice our neighbor to confession; far from it. Many will thence take occasion to make sham confessions and tell a thousand lies to the confessor, to move and induce him to give them alms. Oh, how right is the Wise Man in advising us to believe the old and experienced, and follow their counsel (Ecclus. viii. 9)!

Occasionally, with leave of the superior, you may do well to receive some conscience money from a penitent, for example, when the affair is secret and your penitent cannot conveniently make the restitution himself without its coming to be known. Even then doctors advise the confessor, and it is very good advice, to ask of the person to whom he makes the restitution a note of hand, stating that he has received such a sum from him in a certain case of restitution that someone was charged with; and afterwards give this receipt to the penitent for his greater satisfaction and that of the confessor himself. And though the penitent says that he wants nothing of this, but has full reliance on his confessor, the confessor should not omit this precaution; the party will be glad when he sees the receipt, and will be edified, and more quiet and assured; nor will there come over him afterwards anxieties and suspicions as to whether that money was paid in the right quarter or not, as may readily happen when this precaution is not taken.

But now that we are treating of the vow of poverty, and what it binds us to in rigor, it will be well to declare when you will sin in this matter against the vow of poverty and when not, but only against obedience and against the rules. Theologians treat this question in detail, whether it would be a sin against the vow of poverty on the part of a reli-

gious, without leave of his superior, to receive money from an extern, not for himself, nor to distribute and mete out in his own name, but to do so in the name of the donor. The solution of this question turns on this, that there are two ways in which you may receive money from one person to give to another. The one is when the donor gives me the money that I, in his name, may give it to some specified person or distribute it on such and such pious works. That is the way in which money is given to confessors as conscience money for restitution, or to give in alms to certain poor people. To receive money in this way without leave of the superior, in the Society, would be against our rules, which forbid it, as we have said; but it does not appear that it would be a sin against the vow of poverty, because the donor in that case remains master of his money, and he it is that disposes of it; I am only his minister and instrument, to give it in his name to the person to whom he tells me.

But if the donor gives me the money to spend and distribute freely to any persons that I like, and as I like, then the receiving of it and giving and distributing of it, without the leave of the superior, would be not only against the rules, but against the vow of poverty. In the first place, because then the donor deprives himself of the dominion of the money and, so far as in him lies, transfers it to me that I may dispose of it as I like; and a religious is not capable of that. Secondly, because not only is it against the vow of poverty to become master and proprietor of a thing, but also to have the free use, administration, and dispensation of a thing without leave of and dependence on the superior; for this is a sort of ownership and private property, and is forbidden the religious by his vow of poverty. Nay, they say it is more against the vow of poverty to have the free use of property and possessions than to have the dominion and ownership thereof, because this having the use of property is more distracting and harmful to a religious than

having the dominion and ownership without the use. The end for which the Church and the holy Fathers laid it down that religious cannot hold the dominion and ownership of property, was that so they might be free and disengaged from the use and administration thereof, and able to give themselves more entirely to God, because these cares are a greater hindrance and distraction than ownership. Thus, to save sin against the vow of poverty, it is not enough for a religious not to have the dominion and ownership of another's money, if he undertakes the free use and administration thereof without leave of the superior. Denis the Carthusian says well: Would it not be ridiculous for a father who had a son out of his mind, to be satisfied with depriving him of the ownership and dominion of a knife or a sword, while leaving him the free use of it? Quite as ridiculous is the conduct of those religious who accept the use of other people's money, thinking it enough that they have not the dominion and ownership; they take just that which is most distracting and harmful and prejudicial in the possession of property. There are some even who think that the former case is against the vow of poverty because it is taking and distributing money, or the equivalent thereto, without leave of the superior; though they say it will be a light matter, and not amounting to mortal sin, if the money is at once given to those whom the donor marks out.

Hence follows the solution of a case that is very practical, which is, whether a religious would sin against the vow of poverty who, without leave of his superior, should ask another for money or alms for a relation or friend or penitent of his, and receive and give it, or ask the donor to give or send it. I say that, if the religious who asks for or receives such a thing accepts it with the idea of making himself owner of it or to make use of it, he will sin against the vow of poverty, though he intends to give it or send it to his relation or friend and though, in fact, he does give it

or send it afterwards, either by himself or by means or in the name of another. But if he does not accept it for himself, but, on the contrary, says clearly: "I have no need of it and cannot receive it for myself, but if you please to give it to So-and-So, or leave it with me to give or send it him in your name, you will be doing me a charity and a favor," in this case it will not be against the vow of poverty, although the donor does this out of regard to the religious, and the religious gives him thanks for having done so. The reason is that he does not receive it for himself nor make himself owner of it, but is the mere executor of the will of another, or intercessor, to get him to have this will and make this donation. Much less would it be against the vow of poverty to ask the donor to give or send the donation in his own name to such a person, although that person understands that the gift is due to the mediation and intercession of the religious.

But though this be not against the vow of poverty, it is clear that it is against the perfection of the vow, and expressly against our rules; and to proceed in these things without the leave and against the will of the superior is apt to involve many unseemly consequences. There is, besides, great danger in it of a breach of the vow of poverty. One cannot always be so wide-awake and so attentive to details as to make it clear: "Does the donor give it to me, or how do I receive it?" "Do I give it in my own name or in his?" "Does the donor give it, or do I make myself the owner and give it myself?" Especially so, since the covetous desire of having and commanding money, and distributing and disposing of things, is apt often to blind us, as we said in the last chapter, and under color of apparent reasons make us do things that are contrary to the vow of poverty; therefore we should be afraid and greatly shun these and the like ways of going on. Let it not be said of us what Cassian relates St. Basil to have said to a senator who had left the world and the dignity of senator and become a monk,

that he might not have to earn his livelihood by the labor of his hands, as the other monks did. St. Basil said to him: "You have ruined the senator, and not made yourself a monk"—*Et senatorem perdidisti, et monachum non fecisti*. You are neither senator nor monk.

CHAPTER XVI

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

ST. JEROME relates that in the desert of Nitria one of the monks, who earned their livelihood by the labor of their hands, conceived a desire of getting together some money. He was a spinner of flax, and, covetousness lending energy to his labor, and he at the same time eating very little, he came to save a hundred *solidi*, or, as we might say, a hundred ducats. He died with them in his possession, and when they came to bury him they found the money. The monks assembled to see what should be done in such a case and what use to make of the money. St. Jerome says that there were dwelling there about five thousand monks in separate cells. Some said it should be distributed among the poor; others, that it should be given to the Church; others, that it should be sent to his parents, who were likely to be in some necessity. But the great Macarius, and Abbot Pambo, and Isidore, and others of those graver personages whom they called Fathers—the Holy Ghost speaking in them—said and determined that they should bury the money along with the corpse, saying: *Thy money be with thee unto thy perdition* (Acts viii. 20). And so it was done. St. Jerome goes on to say: "And let no one think that this was cruelty; it was not cruelty, but a sense of religion. This example struck such terror and consternation into all the monks throughout Egypt, that they counted it for a great offense that there should be found in their possession at the hour of death either a sovereign or a sixpence."

St. Augustine [*Pseudo-Augustinus, Sermones ad Fratres in Eremo*, Sermon. 5, in S. Aug. Opera, tom. vi. p. 311, *inter spuria*, ed. Bened. The original, a different account, is in one of the saint's Letters] relates an example of a certain Januarius, a religious, held to be a saint, which I will quote in his own words, which show deep feeling and grief: "Tears and loud lamentations again and again and again should we put forth for the perdition of our Januarius, who was reckoned amongst us a pillar of obedience and poverty, and came to a miserable end. He came to us with tears in his eyes and promised to observe poverty as long as he lived, and yet he possessed in the world, without our knowing it, a vineyard and land. O deadly profession! O treacherous promise! His mouth uttered what his heart abhorred. We believed him a saint, while he was the worst of men. In this manner our Januarius lived for twelve years and more, a bad life, followed by a bad death. A bad life, because he kept secretly hidden away that which he had no right to call his own. A bad death, because not even at the end of his life did he renounce his deviation from the right way, but died obstinate in his sin; and without our knowledge he made a will, and left as his heir a son that he had in the world. Oh, would that, at least in the hour of death, he had told us this, that he might have obtained pardon by our prayers; but he neither confessed nor repented; therefore he is none of our company, nor ever was in his lifetime. Bind, then, the hands of his corpse and put in them, tied up in a cloth, the hundred and eleven shekels which he kept in a cupboard in his cell; and say with tears: *Thy money be to thee unto perdition* (Acts viii. 20). For it is not lawful for us, servants of God, to expend in the food, clothing, or labor of the monastery, what is the price of his eternal damnation."

Caesarius relates that among the Cistercians there was

a religious who fell sick and made his confession to the abbot. They then brought him the Blessed Sacrament, and he opened his mouth to receive it, but he could not close his mouth to swallow the host; and to the surprise of all the priest took the particle from the sick man's mouth and gave it to another sick religious who was there, who received it with much devotion and swallowed it without any difficulty. Not long after, that other religious died, and the cause was discovered that hindered his salvation and benefit; for when they came to wash the body they found attached to it five *solidi*, not of silver, but of copper, and that was an unlawful thing to have. At sight of this all praised God; and when the abbot was informed of it, by his direction they buried him in unconsecrated ground, throwing his bit of money atop of him, and all saying together: "May thy money, that thou didst keep concealed contrary to thy profession, be with thee to thy eternal damnation." And the abbot, relating this occurrence in the next general chapter, added: "And that it may be understood that the reason why he could not swallow the most Holy Sacrament was not any hindrance arising from bodily infirmity, the same day he ate a whole chicken."

It is related in the chronicles of St. Francis that there was a brother in one of the convents of the order who knew how to read a little and, desirous to learn more, found means to get himself a psalter. But the rule forbidding lay brothers to learn to read, the guardian, knowing this, asked him for it. He answered that he had not got it. The guardian pressed him to say where it was, that he might not live proprietor of anything, but the lay brother would not obey. Not long after this he fell dangerously sick, and the guardian, for fear that he should die a proprietor, commanded him in virtue of holy obedience to give him the psalter or tell him where he had hidden it. But the unhappy man, hardened and obstinate in his denial, died without divesting himself of it. When on the night fol-

lowing the burial the sacristan rang for matins at midnight, he felt coming over him a great, heavy shadow, and heard at the same time a frightful inarticulate cry. He fell to the ground like a dead man. The friars, hearing the first peal of the bell for matins and seeing that it stopped, waited a considerable time and then came to look for the sacristan. They found him in a swoon, like one dead; when he came to himself, they learned from him the reason. They started matins, and this horrible shade appeared, making a hideous noise like a hoarse trumpet, without their being able to understand anything of what it said. The whole choir was upset, but the guardian encouraged them and said to the shade: "On the part of our Lord Jesus Christ and His sacred Passion, I call on thee to tell us who thou art, and what thou seekest in this place." It replied: "I am the lay brother whom you buried yesterday." The guardian said to it: "Dost thou want any of our suffrages and prayers, or why hast thou come hither?" It replied: "I want none of your prayers; they will avail me nothing, since I am damned forever on account of the psalter, in the ownership of which I died." The guardian then said: "I command thee in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that since we can do thee no good, thou go away at once and return no more to this place to trouble us." The shade at once disappeared and was never there seen or heard again.

Denis the Carthusian relates the following. A religious, finding his habit torn, went into the tailor's shop and took a piece of cloth to mend it without having asked leave. He fell sick soon after, and must have been a great servant of God, for there he lay dying in great joy and contentment, with no remorse of conscience, nor could the devil find anything wherewith to disturb him. Being thus disposed, he chanced to look towards the corner of his cell where his habit hung, and saw the devil in the shape of a monkey, sitting upon it, and licking with satisfaction the piece of cloth wherewith he had mended it. Then he came to take account

of the fault he had committed in taking the piece of cloth without leave; whereupon he sent to call the superior, told his fault and was reconciled, and the devil immediately vanished.

In the history of the Order of St. Dominic it is related that, when the holy Friar Reginald was Prior of Bologna, a religious had received for alms a piece of cloth of the sort they used, to mend his habit with, but he had received it without leave. The holy man called him to chapter, reproached him in severe language as a thief and proprietor, gave him a good discipline besides, and burned on the spot the piece of cloth in sight of the other religious.

In the same history it is related that, when Albertus Magnus was provincial in that holy order, he gave strict command that no friar should have in his possession or in the possession of a third person, any money to any amount whatsoever, whether his own or another's, or for himself or for another, and that under the severest penalties. And it coming to be proved in a general chapter against a certain friar that he had violated this ordinance and statute, he punished him severely, even to the length of disinterring him from his grave, for he had been dead for some time, and casting him out from consecrated ground onto the dunghill, in imitation of those saints of old who were wont thus to treat brethren who died proprietors.

TWENTIETH TREATISE

OF THE VIRTUE OF CHASTITY



CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Chastity, and the Degrees Whereby We Are to Mount to the Perfection Thereof

THIS is the will of God, your sanctification, that ye abstain from fornication, and know every one of you how to possess the vessel of his body in sanctification and honor; for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to sanctification (I Thess. iv. 3-4, 7)—not to carnal delights, but to serve Him in purity and entirety of body and soul. By the name of sanctity, or sanctification, the Apostle here means chastity, as St. Bernard observes. Christ our Redeemer in the holy Gospel calls it a heavenly and angelic virtue, making us like to the angels. *In the resurrection, in that happy and blessed life, there shall be no marrying nor giving in marriage, but they shall be as angels of God in heaven* (Matt. xxii. 30). So St. Cyprian, addressing certain virgins, says: “You are beginning to enjoy in this life what you are to have in the glory of heaven; you are like the angels so long as you persevere in chastity and purity.” Cassian confirms this, and says that by no other virtue do men become so like the angels so much as by chastity; for by that they live in the flesh as though they had no flesh, but were pure spirits, as St. Paul says: *Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit* (Rom. viii. 9). And in some way we surpass the angels in this respect, because for them, having no bodies, it is not much to observe this purity, but for man, living in the mortal flesh, which so violently wars upon and contradicts the spirit, it is a much greater thing to live as though he had no flesh, but were a pure spirit. So pleasing to God is this virtue that, when the Son of God became man and had to be born of a woman, He chose to be born of a virgin mother, and one consecrated by a vow of chastity, as the saints observe.

St. John in the Apocalypse (xiv. 1-5) says that he saw on Mount Sion (that is, in heaven) in company with the Lamb (that is, Christ) those who kept their virginity, and that they followed him wherever He went and sang a new song which none could sing but the virgins. St. Gregory here observes that the virgins are with Christ on the Mount because by the great merit of chastity they are raised high in glory.

St. Jerome and St. Augustine, speaking of that prerogative of St. John the Evangelist to be more loved by Christ than the rest of the apostles (since the holy Gospel names him *the disciple whom Jesus loved*, John xxi. 7), say that the reason of this special love was his being a virgin. And so the Church sings in the office of his feast: "The reason of Jesus' loving him was because by his special prerogative of chastity he had made himself worthy of this signal love, since, chosen by Him a virgin, a virgin he remained for all time." And so some explain that text of Proverbs (xxii. 11): *He that loveth cleanness of heart shall have the king for his friend*. Therefore did the Lord cherish and favor him so much; therefore did He make him recline on His breast; and what Peter, a married man, did not dare to ask Christ at the Supper, St. John asked him. And on the day of the Resurrection, when St. Mary Magdalen told them that Christ had already risen, he and St. Peter ran to the monument, but he arrived first. And another time when they were in their ship fishing in the Sea of Tiberias, the Lord appeared to them on the shore, and when the others did not recognize Him, he alone who was a virgin (St. Jerome says), with those eagle eyes of his recognized the Virgin and Son of a Virgin and said to St. Peter, *It is the Lord* (John xxi. 7). Finally, when Christ was on the Cross, in that His last will, to whom did He commend His Virgin Mother but to His virgin disciple (John xix. 27)?

But I will leave aside the praises and excellences of chastity, and many other things that we might say of it, because

I intend to be very brief on this matter, imitating therein our Father Ignatius.

Cassian lays down seven degrees of chastity, as so many steps whereby we may mount to the perfection and purity of this heavenly and angelic virtue. The first is for a man in his waking hours never to be overcome or carried away by any unclean and sensual thought or motion. The second is not to dwell on the like thoughts, but as soon as they come, cast them off. The third is not to be moved or thrown off one's balance, little or much, by the sight of any woman. This is a degree of great perfection, and not so common as the first, owing to the great weakness and corruption of our flesh, which readily rises in rebellion on such occasions. The fourth is not to allow the devil in any way to beard you while you are awake, and also, while you are awake, not to suffer in yourself so much as a simple movement of the flesh. The fifth is, when it is necessary to deal with matters of this nature, either studying them or lecturing on them, to pass them by in perfect tranquillity and to be no more moved by the memory of such things than by a treatise on bricks, agriculture, or building. Of this degree our blessed Father Ignatius was perfect master from the date of his conversion, as we read in his Life. The sixth degree is even in sleep to have no illusions or representations or phantasms of anything impure. This argues great purity and is a sign that no impression of the sort remains in the memory; while the contrary, though it is no sin on account of the person's being asleep, shows that the sensual appetite is not wholly overcome and brought into subjection, nor the memory of such things effaced. The seventh and last degree, says Cassian, which is granted to few—as to a certain Abbot Serenus, and others like him, whom the Lord has thus favored—is when one has arrived at such purity that neither waking nor sleeping does one feel in oneself any of those movements which are wont to happen from natural causes. Thus by force of

grace the appetite is reduced to quiet and peaceful subjection, and that frail and weak element of human nature comes to enjoy now the felicity and privileges which it had in the first state of innocence, *the body of sin being destroyed*, as St. Paul says (Rom. vi. 6); and sin in such persons by the grace of the Lord loses the force and masterfulness which it formerly had; they feel no disorderly movement nor anything redolent thereof, but live in the flesh as though they had no flesh.

But we do not hereby mean to say that it is contrary to the perfection of chastity to experience sundry of these motions, waking or sleeping, because it is a natural thing, and Cassian there acknowledges that even in perfect men such things may occur. To some of His servants the Lord is pleased to do them the favor of granting them this perfection of chastity; others by the grace of the Lord scarcely feel anything of these disturbances; others, when anything of that sort offers, recover their peace and quiet as easily as if nothing had happened. All this is that imitation of angelic purity which our Father sets before us in his Constitutions as a thing to aim at—*enitendo angelicam puritatem imitari*. And let this word *enitendo* (striving) be noticed, because the word *strive* means not only to labor at getting, but to labor hard, doing violence to oneself, as is done under difficult circumstances to overcome that difficulty. He wishes to teach and advise us on this point, that to arrive at angelic purity it is necessary to put forth our whole strength into the work and take up the affair a long way back, exercising ourselves in all the virtues and particularly in mortification. For though this is a gift of God, and no human industry is sufficient to attain it, nevertheless the Lord wishes that we should do our part, and He wishes to give us the gift only on that condition.

CHAPTER II

That to Preserve Chastity, Mortification of All the Senses, and Especially of the Eyes, Is Necessary

CASSIAN says that it was the decided opinion of the ancient Fathers, borne out by many experiences, that it was impossible to restrain or overcome this vicious craving of the flesh otherwise than by accustoming oneself to mortify and crush one's own will in all things. St. Basil and other saints argue at great length that to gain and preserve the purity and perfection of chastity, the practice of all the virtues is necessary, since they all serve and help to the guardianship of this virtue, as has been shown already in the course of this work. We will here only mention some particular points, the first of which is the need of custody of the senses, particularly the eyes, the gates whereby evil enters into the heart. On the text: *Who are those who fly as clouds, and as doves gather at their windows?* (Isaias lx. 8), St. Gregory says that the just are said to *fly as clouds* because they rise above the things of earth, and they are said as doves to gather at their windows, or peep-holes, because, taking care not to go out to look through the windows of their senses at exterior things that pass outside, they are preserved from coveting them. But they who lightly go out to look through these windows at the things of the world, are often carried away by desire of them. The Prophet David, holy man as he was and accustomed to soar like a cloud to the consideration of high and divine mysteries, was carried away by what he saw, because he was not cautious in looking (II Kings xi. 3). *Death hath entered by our windows* (Jerem. ix. 21). The death of sin entered by the windows of his eyes and robbed and despoiled his soul and killed it. *Mine eye hath despoiled my soul* (Lam. iii. 51). St. Gregory says: "It is not proper to look at what it is not lawful to desire"—

Intueri non decet quod non licet concupiscere. Things will carry you away if you look at them. They will snatch and steal away your heart; and when you least expect it, you will find yourself a prisoner and a captive.

Holy Job secured himself beforehand well against this. *I made a bargain with mine eyes not even to think of a maiden* (Job xxxi. 1). What manner of bargain is this, says St. Gregory, to bargain with the eyes not to think? It is with the understanding and the imagination, it would seem, that we ought to bargain not to think; with the eyes, not to look. No, he says, it is with the eyes he bargained not to think of a woman, because holy Job knew right well that it is by that entrance that evil thoughts come into the heart; and custody of the eyes and gates of the senses is the right way to keep custody of the heart and understanding. Therefore he says that he made a bargain with his eyes not to think of a woman. So, if you wish not to have impure thoughts, you must keep your eyes chaste and pure, and make a bargain with your eyes not to look at what you cannot lawfully desire. St. Chrysostom reflects on these words: "Who will not wonder, seeing this great man, who braved the devil and wrestled face to face with him and overcame all his machinations and ambushes, not having the courage to confront a girl!" It was, he says, that we may understand how necessary caution is for us in these matters, however religious we may be.

The holy Abbot Ephrem says that three things are great helps to virtue, to chastity particularly—temperance, silence, and custody of the eyes. And though you keep the first two, yet if you do not guard your eyes, your chastity cannot be depended on; because as, when aqueducts are broken, the water is spilled and lost, so is chastity lost when looks and glances are scattered and thrown about here and there. Another saint says that the sight of a woman is like a poisoned arrow that goes straight to the heart, or like a spark falling on straw, which, if it remains there and

is not put out at once, kindles a great conflagration; so is a bad thought originating in a sight.

Of St. Hugh, Bishop of Grenoble, Surius relates that he was so extremely cautious in this matter of looking at women that, though he was bishop more than fifty years, and confessor to many women, and had a great deal of business to transact with ladies of high rank whom the fame of his sanctity attracted not from his own diocese alone, but from all quarters, yet he never knew any woman by sight, since he never looked them in the face so as to know them, except one ugly old crone that was a servant in his house. And he used to say that it was necessary to proceed with this caution because it is impossible for anyone to guard his heart from evil thoughts who does not set a guard on his eyes. We read of St. Bernard that on one occasion he was a little off his guard in looking at a woman, without adverting to what he was doing, and when he took account of it, he was so indignant and ashamed of himself that, though it was winter, he plunged into a pool of icy water hard by, up to the throat, and remained there till they drew him out half dead.

CHAPTER III

That, Particularly in This Virtue of Chastity, It Is Necessary to Make Much Account of Small Things

THE higher and more precious this virtue of chastity is, the greater care and diligence is necessary to preserve it. Everywhere it is of much importance to take account of small and minute things, because, as the Wise Man says: *He that neglecteth small things shall fall by little and little* (Ecclus. xix. 1). But especially is it necessary in this virtue, because any stain, however small, is a great disfigurement to chastity. In things precious and beautiful, as we see, any flaw disfigures them, and that the more, the

more excellent and beautiful they are. So it is with this most high and fair virtue of chastity; we may even say that there is no virtue more tender or more delicate. Brother Giles, one of the first companions of St. Francis, likens chastity to a brilliant mirror, that at the slightest breath or puff is covered with a spot and loses its luster and brightness; so does chastity lose its splendor and beauty for very little things. Therefore we must go our way with great caution, mortifying the senses and cutting short and stopping at once any evil thought, and shunning occasions; for an evil thought, like a flame, leaves a trace of itself wheresoever it touches, more or less according as it is dwelt upon; and if it does not burn, at least it leaves a smut. Thus these things, if they do not go so far as to set fire, are enough to tarnish, because they awaken in the soul imaginations and thoughts contrary to chastity, and impure and disorderly motions in the body.

With great reason did our Father say that the matter of chastity needs no comment. No man can trust himself; no man can say to himself: "Up to this point I shall not catch fire; going ever so little further, I should; it is lawful thus far, but a step or two beyond, it would be unlawful." You cannot use such language as this in the matter of chastity: "I will go so far, but not a step further;" for when you think it least, you will go where you never thought to go. He who casts himself down a slippery descent thinks only to go as far as the particular spot which he has marked; but the weight of his body and the smoothness of the rock makes him go further, though he had no such intention when he started. So it is here; this is very slippery ground, and the weight or inclination of our flesh downwards is very great. The delicate nature of this virtue does not allow of our going so near to losing it and putting ourselves in these dangers. It is a most precious treasure, and we have it stowed in an earthen vessel so frail that in a trice there comes a crash, and we have nothing of it left.

Thus it is necessary to go our way with much solicitude and diligence, stopping in every way the approaches to any disorderly motion whereby this passion might gain the mastery of our heart.

We read of one of the ancient Fathers that he had a great gift of chastity and, nevertheless, went about with great care and caution even on slight occasions, casting out any evil thought at once as soon as it started, and being extremely careful in his looks, his conversation, and his intercourse with others. His companions said to him: "Father, why are you so apprehensive, seeing that the Lord has fortified you with the gift of chastity?" The holy man answered: "Look you, if I do what I ought and what is possible on my part in these little minute points, the Lord will help me never to come to a fall in greater things; but if I am negligent and begin to be careless in these trifles, I do not know that He will help me; anyhow, I should deserve that the Lord should cast me off from His hand, and so I should come to fall. And therefore I make it a point to neglect nothing, but ever do what is in my power in all things, though they seem petty and trifling." Sur-ius relates of St. Thomas Aquinas that, though he had received supernaturally from God the gift of chastity, so as to feel no temptations against it, and angels had told him that he should never lose the chastity which he had received, nevertheless he took extreme care to withdraw his eyes from looking at women, and on every other occasion that could do him harm. Thus, then, we should behave if we wish to preserve in ourselves the purity and perfection of this virtue, otherwise we may have reason to fear a fall. This is what holy Job meant by saying: *I made a covenant with my eyes not to look at a woman* (xxxix. 1), to escape any evil thought that might thence have come to me. And he went on to say: *For if I did not do that, what part would God have in me?* As though he would say: "If there were not in me this care to stand on my

guard and shun occasions, and cast off any evil thought, and make account of small things, there might come upon me some evil desire whereby I should lose God." The devil in this business acts like a master burglar, who, having a mind to rob a house and finding it locked up, observes some small aperture or little window by which he cannot get in himself, but thrusts in some little thief of a boy, that he may go in and open the door for him to do his job. So the devil sends evil thoughts, a slight glance, and other little things of the sort, like small thieves to open the door for him to come in. Therefore it is of great importance to go our ways very cautiously, shunning occasions of sin and anticipating them from afar; and any care that we may take on this point will be well spent.

Cassian brings in here the saying of the Apostle: *Every wrestler abstaineth from all that can hinder his wrestling* (I Cor. ix. 25), and says: "Those athletes who performed and ran in the Olympic games, not to weaken or diminish the strength they required for them, abstained from foods that could hurt them; they shunned idleness and gave themselves up to exercises that were likely to increase their strength. And not only that, but to be nimbler and stronger they put on their reins plates of lead, so that they might have no motion or illusion even in sleep, nor anything befall them to the detriment of their strength and vigor. This they did to gain a prize and a perishable and corruptible crown; what ought we to do in all reason to gain this angelical and heavenly virtue, and an eternal crown that will remain for ever and ever! *And they indeed to gain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible* (I Cor. ix. 25)."

CHAPTER IV

That in Confession We Should Take Particular Account of Anything Contrary to Chastity

ST. BONAVENTURE, speaking of confession, lays down a general instruction very important for all. He says that all should be much on their guard not to fail to confess sundry little things that often happen and cause shame, on the plea: "Oh, that's no sin, at least it is not a mortal sin, and we are not bound to confess venial sins." Hereby great evils often gain entrance, which to many have been the beginning of their perdition. God deliver us from thus giving entry to the devil and opening to him this side door, for he needs nothing more than this to effect his purpose. Presently, shame making common cause with the vileness of the thing in question, he will get you to believe that that was not a sin which was, or, at least, that it is doubtful whether it was, and that you may omit to confess it. In people who have been good and not in the habit of having mortal sins on their conscience, this shame is wont more especially to prevail when anything happens to them; because, as pride and craving for esteem is so connatural to us and so deep-rooted in our constitution, it then starts up and makes us greatly afraid of falling from our reputation and losing the good opinion which our confessor had of us. So it sets the man to work looking for reasons to persuade himself that this disgraceful act, which he now finds himself so ashamed to mention, did not amount to mortal sin, and so he is not obliged to confess it.

At other times, though he does not altogether conceal it, shame makes him so mince matters, and speak in such roundabout terms, that the confessor cannot tell what he would be at, or at least takes it not to be so grave a matter as it is; and the penitent might just as well have held his tongue as say what he did say. A confession ought to

be so clear that the confessor shall understand the gravity of the sin. If the penitent confesses a thing in such a way that it does not appear to be a sin, or in such a way that the gravity and necessary circumstances are not declared, it is as though he had entirely failed to confess it. Shame, or rather pride, blinds and deceives people so that they do not declare it all. Little or no sorrow has that man got for his faults who has not virtue enough to tell and declare them to his confessor. You should offer this shame and confusion in compensation and satisfaction for the fault that you have committed, thereby to appease God our Lord. The very feeling of shame and difficulty in telling the fault ought to be enough to rouse your suspicions and make you think it worth while to tell it, though there were no more in the matter than the overcoming of this shame, and the mortifying of yourself and not letting the devil and the flesh have the best of the transaction.

This especially, because in this matter of chastity there are many things which those who know no better think are not mortal sins, and which really are so. There are other things about which it is not easy to determine whether they amount to mortal sins or not, because they are very doubtful; and these also you are bound to confess under pain of mortal sin, saying that you were in doubt whether such a thing that you did was a mortal sin or not, or that you doubt whether you consented or took delight voluntarily and with advertence in the thing or not. Thus it is enough for one to be in doubt whether his fault amounted to mortal sin or not, to be bound to confess it under pain of mortal sin; and if he does not confess it, his confession will be sacrilegious, and his Communion also.

Very often the confessor himself, for all his learning, cannot settle whether the thing amounts to a mortal sin or not; and how dare the penitent be judge in his own cause, and defy the court, and make up his mind that it did not come to so much, and so fail to confess it? Such a one

puts himself in great danger, especially when it appears that he is inclined to leave the thing alone and would like, if he could, to blot it out, and that it should not appear to count for so much, for the shame that he has in saying it. I would not take it upon myself to reassure him. There needs no better witness than the individual's own conscience. He who accuses himself in confession of smaller things, cannot help feeling remorse, seeing that he is omitting a thing that he knows to have more in it than all the rest. At the hour of death you would not dare to fail to declare it. Just as little should you dare to leave it out now, seeing that we should confess every time we go to confession all our doings just as if we were going to die there and then. St. Gregory says: "It is a mark of good souls to fear fault even where there is none." So, too, it is a mark of souls that are not good not to fear fault where there is ground for fearing it.

Some people say: "I leave it out, not to make myself scrupulous." This is another usual deceit of the devil. It is not making yourself scrupulous, since those who are aiming at virtue confess, and should confess, less things than that, not of necessity, not out of scruple, but for devotion and reverence for the Most Holy Sacrament. Such is the purity with which we ought to approach it that, even where there is no fault, it is the counsel of spiritual men that we should accuse ourselves in this fashion: "Father, I accuse myself of having had impure temptations." And if you think that you have been negligent in resisting them, you should say: "I think there has been some negligence in letting them in and not casting them off, but nothing more than light and venial negligence." It is very common for there to be some fault and negligence therein, because these temptations take a great hold of one. But even though you think there has been no fault on your part, you may say: "I accuse myself of having had many thoughts and temptations against purity, though I think that by the mercy of

the Lord I did what I could on my part, and there was no fault in them." That is how we are advised to confess also evil thoughts that arise against God and His saints and against faith.

Even of less things than this we are advised to accuse ourselves in this matter; as of what happens in sleep, although there is no fault there, because where there is no liberty there is no fault. Nevertheless, you are well advised to accuse and humble yourself over this illusion, though you need not when you have given no cause for it and there has been no fault of yours therein. So they who fear God make a point of seeking reconciliation on this matter before Communion, out of reverence for so sublime a sacrament. Theologians examine whether we should omit Communion on that account, and they say it would be more reverent to put it off to another day, unless there is some special reason to the contrary, as when it is a general Communion day for the community, and one would be noted if one did not communicate; but where Communion is optional, it is good to follow the advice given.

CHAPTER V

How Violent and Dangerous Is the Passion of Love, and How Much We Ought to Fear It

ONE of the things most to be feared is the passion of love. Love is the chiefest and strongest of the passions, and the passion most difficult to withstand; all the greater the risk we run of being carried away and thrown headlong by it. The blessed St. Augustine well sets forth the force and violence of this passion and the reason we have to fear it, by two grave examples from Holy Writ. The first is that of our father Adam. The saint asks: What was the reason why Adam obeyed the voice of his wife and broke the commandment of God by eating of the

forbidden tree? Can it be that Adam was deceived and led to believe that, if he ate that fruit, he should be like God, as the serpent had told Eve? It is not to be supposed that Adam, gifted with such profound wisdom as he was, could have been deceived to the extent of believing such a thing. So says the Apostle St. Paul: *Adam was not deceived like Eve* (I Tim. ii. 14) to believe such a thing as that. So St. Augustine observes that when God asked Eve: *Why hast thou done this?* she answered: *The serpent deceived me and I ate.* But when He asked Adam, he did not answer: "The woman that Thou gavest me deceived me, and I ate," but answered: *The woman that thou gavest me for companion gave me that fruit, and I ate* (Gen. iii. 12-13). He had conceived such love and such affection for his wife that, not to vex her, he did what she asked. This is the way that Adam was deceived; it was love that deceived him—not that he was overcome by sensuality and concupiscence of the flesh, says St. Augustine, for at that time there was not that rebellion in it; but he was carried away by love and good will of friendship, by which, sometimes, to please a friend we displease God. Thus it was by love that sin entered into the world, and with it death and all evils and afflictions.

The second example is that of Solomon. What, says St. Augustine, made Solomon fall into such folly as to turn idolater? It is not to be supposed, says St. Augustine, that a man to whom God had given such wisdom could have believed that there was any divinity in idols, or any profit in honoring them. What, then, brought him to commit such a signal folly as to adore them and offer them incense? Do you know what? Love. Holy Writ itself tells us this clearly. *He loved with a most passionate love idolatrous women, those women concerning whom God had given command to the children of Israel to have nothing to do with them, since without doubt they would pervert them and bring them to worship their gods* (III Kings xi. 1-2). Solomon did not obey this commandment of God and so that

befell him which God said; for taking one woman of them to wife he built a temple to the idol which she adored; and taking another he built another to her idols too, and so to all the rest. They adored there their idols, and King Solomon, with all his gravity and wisdom, adored them also along with them, and offered them incense, not because he believed that there was anything there to worship, says St. Augustine, but because he was overcome and blinded by love, and was loth to displease the objects of his affections, and wished to give pleasure and satisfaction to those whom he loved so much. Love perverted his heart.

Therefore saints and masters of spiritual life warn us to be much on our guard against this passion and against all occasions that may carry us thereto. Even though the love seem good and be for persons of high virtue and holiness; even though the talk and conversation be on good and spiritual subjects, and the parties to it fancy that such conversation is a great help to them to advance in spirit; nevertheless let them proceed with much care and reserve. This is the common teaching of the saints, and St. Bonaventure applies it, saying that spiritual love is apt to degenerate and be adulterated, and from spiritual turn to that which is carnal and sensual. And though at the beginning it were wine, it afterwards gets mixed with water; and what was balsam is adulterated by admixture of other liquors, base and vile, according to that text of Isaias (i. 22): *Thy wine is mingled with water*. This is the means and bait which the devil is wont to employ to deceive a man and carry him off little by little to where he wants him to go.

St. Bonaventure says very well that the devil does what the master of the feast does. In the beginning he puts out good wine, and then that which is worse (John ii. 10). In the beginning he makes them believe that all is devotion and spirituality, and that they shall derive great profit from this intimacy and familiarity; and when he sees them now grown soft and overcome, and thinks that they are pledged

to one another, then he openly brings out his poison; this was the bait set to start with to gather them into the fish trap. And the devil is not wearied, says St. Bonaventure, with spending a long time playing his catch with this bait, which seems so good; he counts it all well spent in return for gaining the object of his desire, that this spiritual love may come to end in carnal and sensual love. Oh, how many, says St. Bonaventure, have started conversations and intimacy with certain other persons under color of some spiritual motive, thinking that their whole dealing was of God and spiritual things, things of profit to their souls; and so possibly it was at first, but little by little this love fell away and degenerated, and their conversation came to turn on topics irrelevant, light, and ridiculous! *They began in the spirit, and ended in the flesh* (Gal. iii. 3).

Gerson tells of a servant of God highly endowed as well in learning as in virtue, who used to hold conversations with a nun, a servant of God, on holy subjects profitable to the soul. But little by little, along with this conversation and interchange of ideas, love grew, *sed non in Domino*—"not in the Lord." The attachment was so strong that he could not refrain from going to visit her many times, and prolonging the interviews; and when he was not in her company, he could scarcely give over thinking of her. Nevertheless, so blind was the good man that he did not think there was any danger in all this, or any deceit of the devil, for he said to himself that nothing evil ever came into his thoughts about her—an excuse wherewith many are apt to be blinded and deceived. So the thing went on until he was forced, on a certain occasion that arose, to take a long journey. Then, on going away, the servant of God felt that this love was not pure or chaste, and but for God's removing the occasion by this absence he was very near falling into great mischief. And so, says Gerson, there speaking of the great danger and deceitfulness that there is in love, all is not gold that glitters, nor is everything

charity that appears so. And he quotes the saying of a person of high sanctity, that there is nothing to be more dreaded and held in greater suspicion than love, though it be with persons of great virtue and holiness; and he alleges hereupon the witness of the Wise Man: *There is a way that seemeth to a man right, and the last portions of it lead to death* (Prov. xvi. 25). Such seeming right ways are very crooked and are bound to end in evil. Such, he says, is apt to be this way of love.

CHAPTER VI

Of Some Remedies against Impure Temptations

SOME such remedies we mentioned in the treatise On Temptations; others we put off to this place, and shall treat of them now. To begin with, prayer is one of the chief remedies that Holy Writ and the saints prescribe for all temptations, and Christ Himself teaches us in the Gospel: *Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. xxvi. 41). Bede says that, as the thief runs when he hears cries, and all the world is getting up and coming to the rescue, so the cry of prayer makes the devil fly, and rouses the angels and blessed saints to come to our succor and aid. We read of St. Bernard that, when they came to rob him of his chastity, he cried out, "Robbers, robbers!" and therewith the robber fled. Now, if crying out and calling upon men puts a robber to flight, how much more will that robber, as cunning as he is old, who seeks to rob us of the spiritual riches of our soul, take to flight upon the cries for help that we put forth to God and His saints!

It is a special and singularly effectual remedy for this purpose to betake ourselves to the consideration of the Passion of Christ and hide ourselves in His wounds. "There is no remedy more powerful and efficacious against impure temptations," says St. Augustine, "than to think of the Pas-

sion and death of Christ our Redeemer. Nowhere have I found such an efficacious remedy as to take refuge in the wounds of Christ; there I sleep securely and there I come to life again." A grave doctor notes and reflects very happily that the evangelist did not say that the side of Christ was wounded, but that it was *opened*, that we might understand that here was the way opened to penetrate to the heart of Christ, and that there must be our refuge and place of safety, in those *holes of the rock* (Cant. ii. 14), *which is Christ* (I Cor. x. 4). St. Bernard also assigns this remedy and says: "When you feel this temptation, gather yourself together at once to think of the Passion of Christ and say: My God and my Lord is nailed to a cross, and am I to give myself over to pleasures and amusements?" This is like what that faithful servant answered when the king bade him go and take his ease and enjoy himself at home: *The ark of God and my lord and captain Joab are in the field and under canvas, and am I to go and eat and take my pleasure in my own house? Please God, never will I do such a thing* (II Kings xi. 11). That is what we should say: "Thou, O Lord, art on the Cross in expiation of the pleasure that men take in sinning; I have no mind to take pleasure at such cost to Thee."

Some help themselves in these temptations by the memory and consideration of the last things, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Ecclus. vii. 40). Some profit by the consideration of hell, reflecting on that saying of St. Gregory: "A pleasure lasting for a moment followed by an eternity of torment." To go deep into the study of this eternity, in which the wicked shall be for ever and ever, so long as God is God, is a very efficacious means to keep off sin, according to that saying of the prophet: *They shall go down alive into hell* (Psalm liv. 16). To go down alive into hell in thought and reflection is a great safeguard against going there after death. Others help themselves by

the consideration of heaven, thinking what a folly it is, as indeed it is, to give up God in exchange for a passing pleasure, and so lose everlasting glory. And what greater folly could there be than to give over doing what God commands us, while He invites us to heavenly glory for doing it, and go and do what the devil wants, inviting us to hell for the doing of the same? Others find great profit in the remembrance of death and the last judgment. All these are excellent considerations; let each one have recourse to that from which he finds he derives the greatest benefit. Sometimes he will find it in one, sometimes in another; and so we are to get help from all. It will also be a great help in these temptations to make the sign of the cross on your forehead and your heart and call with devotion on the holy name of Jesus. Wonderful effects have been seen to follow from this, and many miracles, which we have in the histories.

Devotion to Our Lady is a help everywhere; so there should be no one who does not practise it or fail to have recourse at once to this sovereign Virgin with great confidence. She cannot cease to be merciful who bore for nine months, enclosed in her womb, Him Who is mercy itself. She is the Mother of Mercy and Advocate of Sinners, whom she loves because she sees how much her Son loves them and at what a price He has bought them. Above all, she sees that sinners were the occasion of the Eternal Word's taking flesh of her flesh, and of her becoming Mother of God. For this reason she looks upon them with compassionate eyes, and intercedes for them with her Son, and obtains of Him all that she asks. What can a son refuse his mother, and such a Son such a Mother? This brought St. Bernard to utter that celebrated sentence: "Let him be silent about thy praises, glorious Virgin, who has invoked thee in his troubles and necessities, and remembers thy aid to have been denied him"—*Sileat misericordiam tuam, Virgo beata, si quis est qui invocatam te in necessitatibus suis sibi meminerit defuisse*. But though in all temptations

and on all occasions this remedy is very effectual, it is particularly so in this matter of which we treat, so pleasing is purity and chastity to the most pure Virgin. Some doctors say that the virginal purity which St. John the Baptist possessed in so high a degree that they say he never sinned even venially against it, was due to Our Lady's visit to St. Elizabeth, a visit which lasted three months and was, as St. Ambrose says, "a visit at once corporal and spiritual. Friendship and relationship was not the only cause why the Virgin stayed so long in the house of her cousin; it was likewise for the spiritual good of so great a prophet." If at the outset her visit was followed with so great benefit that the child rejoiced and was sanctified in his mother's womb, and St. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost at hearing the Virgin's greeting, what must have been the fruit and profit of her presence and conversation extending for so long a time!

Father Master Avila testifies to having witnessed, in persons troubled with this temptation, many beneficial effects gained through Our Lady the Virgin by the daily recitation of some prayer in honor of her Immaculate Conception and the virginal purity wherewith she conceived and bore the Son of God. Much to this purpose are some verses which the Church sings: "After childbirth thou didst remain a virgin inviolate. O Mother of God, intercede for us; Virgin of Virgins, meekest and mildest of all, keep us clean of sins, and make us meek and chaste." Here putting before her her own immaculate and perpetual virginity, we beg her to obtain for us this virtue, the better to please her and her most exalted Son.

A good remedy also is devotion to the saints and their relics. Caesarius relates a thing which he says was related to himself by the very person to whom it happened, a religious of the Cistercian Order named Bernard. Before he entered religion, going on a journey, he said that he carried with him, hung round his neck, a reliquary containing relics

of the holy martyrs John and Paul. On his way an occasion of impurity occurred, and at the time he did not so much notice it, but still was negligent in resisting the temptation and repelling the thoughts that went with it. Then the holy relics began knocking at his breast, whereof, nevertheless, he took small heed, and saw nothing in it. The temptation ceased, and with it the knockings. But a little while after that the temptations returned, and at once the holy relics began their knockings again, as if to bid him see what he was about and cast off those evil thoughts. Then he fell in with the warning and recollected himself, and set about diligently resisting the temptation.

It is also a very helpful devotion frequently to visit the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, and beg Our Lord's aid to obtain the victory, and above all the frequent reception of this Divine Sacrament is a signal remedy, according to those words of the prophet: *Thou hast set before me a table to give me virtue and strength against all my persecutors* (Psalm xxii. 5). The saints say that this is a grand remedy to meet all temptations, but particularly to overcome temptations of the flesh and preserve chastity. For this Divine Sacrament abates that incentive to sin which is called *fomes peccati*; it diminishes and appeases the motions of the flesh and the ardors of concupiscence, as water does fire, as St. Cyril says. They quote to this effect that text of the Prophet Zachary: *What is the good gift of God, and what the beautiful gift of the Lord, but the wheat of the elect and the wine that beareth virgins?* (Zach. ix. 17), of which we have spoken in its place.

CHAPTER VII

That Penance and Mortification of the Flesh Is a Very Good Remedy against Temptations to Impurity

THE blessed St. Jerome says: "The fiery arrows of the devil are to be extinguished by the rigor of fasting and watching," and such was his own practice. The same St. Jerome relates of St. Hilarion that, wearied and tired out with temptations of the flesh and evil thoughts, he waxed wroth with his body and said: "Ass, I will make thee stop thy kicking, for I will stop thy barley and give thee only straw. I am minded to kill thee with hunger and thirst, to lay heavy loads on thee, to weary thee with heat and cold, that thou mayest think rather of merely getting something to eat than of wantonness." An excellent remedy this, commended by the saints, and much used by the servants of God even without their feeling this war.

In the chronicles of the Order of blessed St. Francis it is related that someone asked a holy man why St. John Baptist, having been sanctified in his mother's womb, betook himself to the desert and there did such severe penance (Mark i. 4-6). The holy man answered: "Tell me why, when meat is fresh and good, do they salt it?" The other answered: "The better to preserve it from corruption." "So, then," said the other, "the glorious Baptist salted himself with penance that his sanctity might be better preserved from all corruption of sin," as the Church has it in her hymn. But if, even in time of peace, before these temptations are felt, it is proper to practise this exercise of penances and mortifications, how much more proper will it be in time of war! St. Thomas says, and he has it from Aristotle: *Castitas dicitur a castigatione*—"Chastity is so called from chastisement," because this vice must be restrained by chastisement of the body; and he says that unclean vices are like boys that need the whip because they are wanting in reason.

And if from this ill-treatment of the body there follows weakness or injury to bodily health, the same St. Jerome answers elsewhere: *Melius est stomachum dolere quam mentem*—"It is better for the stomach to be hurt than the soul." Better for the legs to totter for weakness than for chastity to waver. Still, discretion is always necessary; and so these remedies must be used according to the strength of the subject, and the temptation and the danger of each individual. There is a case of the war's being so violent as to threaten the loss of chastity; and then the right thing is to wager the body, at any risk, to secure the life of the soul. Physicians say here: *Extremis morbis extrema et exquisita sunt remedia*—"When the illness is deadly, and seems to be now making an end of the man, far-fetched and extraordinary remedies are used." So it must be in temptations and spiritual infirmities, when they are violent. Quite a different case is that of one struggling with a temptation that is no more than normal and ordinary, in which there is not so much danger to be apprehended, and, consequently, no such excessive pains are needed to overcome it.

But masters of spiritual life observe that these temptations of the flesh sometimes arise from the flesh itself, and redound on to the soul from the body. This is usually the case with youths and persons of sound health, in the enjoyment of bodily comforts. Then, as has been said, it is very profitable to apply the remedy there, since there is the root of the malady. At other times the temptation springs from the soul by suggestion of the devil. The sign of that is when the struggle is rather with thoughts and foul imaginations than with impure feelings and motions of the body; or, if there are any such, it is not that the temptation begins with them, but it begins with thoughts, of which those feelings and motions in the flesh are the result. And this is the case sometimes when the body is quite weak and almost dead, and yet those thoughts are most lively, as St. Jerome

relates to have happened to himself; for when his body was weak, worn away and half-dead with the great penances and austerities which he practised, still he fancied himself at times to be in the midst of the dances and balls of the Roman ladies.

They also have down in their books another sign, which is when the temptations come out of season, just when the man would least wish to have them, and there is least occasion for them; when they pay no reverence to times of meditation or Mass, or to holy places in which, bad as a man may be, he yet generally has some sentiment of piety and reverence, and abstains from thinking of such things. Nay, sometimes the thoughts are monstrous and hideous beyond anything that the man ever heard of or considered or imagined. By the force with which they come, and the strange words that he hears interiorly, the man feels that they do not come of himself, but of another's saying and another's doing. All these things are manifest signs that this is a persecution coming of the devil, and does not arise from the flesh, although the body is affected thereby. Then other remedies are to be applied. And all say that for this end it is good to take up some lawful occupation calling for care and effort, so as to drive out of the mind those foul imaginations. To this intent St. Jerome, as he himself relates, set himself to learn Hebrew, a laborious task, but not unfruitful in his case.

The same St. Jerome tells of a young monk, a Greek by birth, who was in a monastery of Egypt, much harassed by this temptation of the flesh. He fasted much and did great penances, but still the temptation did not cease. The superior took this means to cure him. He commanded a monk, one of the most ancient of the brethren, a grave and rough man, to contradict this youth many times, and reprove him in harsh and injurious terms, and, after having rated him soundly, then to go to complain of him as if he had been the offended party and not the other monk. The

ancient had the wit to do this right well, and at every step he took occasion of anything that turned up to scold him severely, and further than that he marched him straight off to trial before the superior, and had prearranged witnesses ready to say that this other monk had been disrespectful to his senior. The superior rebuked him and gave him sound good penances, as though he were in fault. This went on every day, and the poor fellow, seeing himself so ill-used and the victim of so much false witness, was much afflicted and very sad in his cell, and shed many tears, begging our Lord to turn to his defense, because he saw himself forlorn and abandoned, finding no human support—everybody was against him. There was no fault or breach of discipline committed in the house but they imputed it to him, and two or three would get up at once to testify against him, and draw upon his head penances and rebukes. This went on for a whole year. At the end of the year another monk asked him how the temptation of the flesh was going on. He answered: *Vivere mihi non licet, et fornicari licebit?*—"They won't let me so much as live, and do you ask me if I have any thought of that? I have no memory of that temptation." So his spiritual father cured him; with the greater pain and affliction he got quit of the lesser. And St. Jerome adds this, speaking to persons in religion: "If this man had been living alone, who ever would have aided him to overcome the temptation?" And in the rule of his monks this is one of the reasons that the saint gives to show how religion and a life under obedience befits us: "That you may not do what you have a mind to do; that you may eat what they give you, wear the dress that shall fall to your lot, do the task they put upon you, go to bed at night tired, and be made to get up when you have not had your fill of sleep"—*Ut non facias quod vis, comedas quod iuberis, vestiare quod acceperis, operis tui pensum persolvas, lassus ad stratum venias, necdum expleto somno surgere compellaris*. Thus, one thing upon another, you

are so occupied by obedience that temptations find no room to enter, and you have no time to think of anything but of what you have got to do.

The blessed St. Francis used to say that he had learned by experience how the devils dreaded and kept aloof from severity and rigor of penance, and fastened on and tempted mightily those who treated themselves to comforts and delicacies. St. Athanasius relates of St. Anthony Abbot that he taught the same to his disciples. "Believe me, brethren, the devil greatly dreads the vigils of good men, their prayers and fasts and voluntary poverty." St. Ambrose quotes to this effect the saying of the prophet: *I clad myself in sackcloth, and sheltered and guarded my soul with fasting* (Psalm lxviii. 11-12). This, he says, is a good defense and armor against the enemy. We have also for this the teaching of Christ, Who told us, when He cast out the unclean spirit which the disciples had been unable to cast out: *This sort of devil goeth not out but by prayer and fasting* (Mark ix. 28). To prayer, He adds penance and fasting as a very proper means to scare away this sort of devils. Thus, under these temptations we should not rest satisfied with having recourse to prayer, but we should also exercise ourselves very specially in corporal works of penance and mortification, always with the consent of our confessor or superior, that in all things we may be more assured of our way.

A religious who was assailed by this temptation asked holy Brother Giles what remedy he should take against it. "What would you do, my brother," said the saint, "if a dog were coming to bite you?" The religious answered: "I would take a stone or a stick, and give it him till I made him run away from me." The saint said: "Do so, then, with your flesh which offers to bite you, and this temptation will fly away from you." So excellent is this remedy that sometimes any labor and pain, though it be but slight, is apt to divert and get rid of this temptation, as to stretch out one's

arms in the form of a cross, to bend the knees, to strike one's breast, to take a discipline, to pinch oneself or pull out hairs, to stand for some time on one leg, and the like.

It is related in the Life of St. Andrew the Apostle that, while St. Andrew was at Corinth, an old man named Nicholas came to him and told him that for seventy-four years he had lived an immoral life, giving the rein to his disorderly appetites and surrendering himself to all manner of shameful lust; that a little while ago he had gone into a brothel to offend God, taking with him the Gospel; that a bad woman belonging to that establishment, with whom he sought to sin, held off from him in great terror, and besought him not to touch her, nor approach the place where she was, because she saw in him marvelous and mysterious things. Upon that, the old man asked St. Andrew to give him a remedy for that his great weakness and inveterate custom of sinning. The saint put himself in prayer and fasted five days, entreating our Savior to pardon this miserable old man and grant him the gift of chastity. At the end of the five days the apostle, still persevering in prayer, heard a voice from heaven which said to him: "I grant what thou askest Me for the old man, but it is My will that, as thou hast fasted for him, so he should fast and afflict himself on his own account if he wishes to be saved." The holy apostle bade Nicholas fast, and all the Christians to make prayer for him and crave mercy of the Lord. God heard them so effectually that Nicholas on his return home gave away all he had to the poor, and macerated his flesh with great austerity; and for the space of six months he ate nothing but dry bread, and his only drink was a little water. Having accomplished this penance, he passed out of this life; and God revealed to St. Andrew, who at that time was absent, that he was saved.

In the "Spiritual Meadow" there is a story of a monk's going to one of the ancient Fathers and asking him: "What shall I do to escape suffering the evil thoughts that assail

me?" The old man said to him: "I have never been tried with the like thoughts." The monk was scandalized at that answer, and went off to another ancient Father and said to him: "I want you to know that such and such a Father has told me that he never either has been or is assailed with evil thoughts; and I am shocked because it seems to me that he has said a thing beyond the bounds of human nature." The Father said to him: "It cannot be without reason that man of God spoke to you such words; go back and beg his pardon, and he will tell you the reason why he said so." The monk went back and said to him: "Forgive me, Father, for going off the other day so foolishly without taking leave of you; I beg you further to tell me how you have escaped such assaults." The old man answered: "Because, ever since I have been a monk, I have never eaten my fill of bread, nor drunk enough water to satisfy me, nor slept enough; and this abstinence has kept me from the conflict of thoughts which you spoke of."

CHAPTER VIII

Of Other Remedies against Impure Temptations

THE blessed St. Gregory says that sometimes impure temptations and the molestations of evil thoughts and motions are apt to be remnants and remains of an evil past life, and a punishment and chastisement of former license and evil habits; and that then that fire has to be put out with tears, weeping copiously over the past.

St. Bonaventure says that it is a very good remedy in temptations to judge oneself deserving of this affliction and distress, to recognize that the faults and license of your past life quite merit such a chastisement, and suffer the same with patience and humility, saying with Joseph's brethren: *We deservedly suffer these things because we have sinned against our brother* (Gen. xlii. 21). In this

way, says St. Bonaventure, you will more readily appease God, and the temptation will turn to your profit and advantage. This recognition of oneself as worthy of chastisement calls down the tender mercies of God; thus we read in Holy Scripture that the people of Israel made great use of it to obtain God's pardon (Dan. iii. 28; ix. 5).

Another very efficacious means to gain the favor and aid of the Lord, and come out victorious and triumphant over our enemies in all temptations and particularly in this, is to distrust ourselves and put our whole trust in God, of which we have treated largely elsewhere, and shall say something afterwards in speaking of the fear of God. It will be enough here to say in general that humility is the great remedy against temptations. The revelation is well known that was given to St. Anthony. Rapt in spirit one day, he saw the whole world full of nets, and cried out in tears: "Who shall escape, O Lord, so many nets as these?" And he heard a voice which said to him: "The humble man, Anthony." Be you, then, humble, and God will deliver you from these nets and temptations. *The Lord hath care of little ones; I humbled myself, and he saved me* (Psalm cxiv. 6). High mountains are stricken with storms and thunderbolts; it is the tall trees that the wind tears up; but reeds, osiers, and lowly shrubs, that bow and bend and sway from side to side, remain standing after the storm is over. In accordance with this it will also be a good and useful thing to gather humility and self-knowledge out of these impure temptations, seeing that such things come over us. We might say: "Thou seest here, O Lord, what I am. What was to be expected of this dunghill but the like odors? What can be expected of the earth that Thou hast cursed but thistles and thorns? This is the fruit that our earth is capable of yielding if Thou dost not cleanse it." These temptations and bad inclinations that we have furnish good ground for humbling ourselves. If poor and mean clothes aid a man to humble himself, as the saints

say, how much more should we be helped to humility by such vile and filthy thoughts coming over us! Holy Brother Giles used to say that our flesh was like the unclean animal that with great eagerness rushes into the mud and takes its delight there; or like the beetle, whose life it is to wallow in dung. This consideration will greatly help us not to let ourselves be carried away by these thoughts.

And generally, in any temptation whatsoever, it is well not to take any account of that to which the temptation moves you, but to turn in at once upon oneself, humbling oneself, and saying: "How wicked I must be, that such things come into my head!" Thus you steal away bodily from the temptation, and the devil is left in the lurch. It is also a great help to enter into sentiments of confusion over the temptation and those bad thoughts and motions, as if they were your own fault, though you are very far from consenting to them. The devil rages and is devoured with pain at seeing such humility; and, proud creature that he is, cannot endure it. You cannot give him a greater slap in the face, or take any better means to make him sooner cease to tempt you, than to let him see that you will make capital out of what he contrived for your ruin. And, besides, this shows how far your will is from offending God, which is a thing that affords great satisfaction and sense of security. It will be also well at times to insult and mock the devil, as by saying: "Aroint thee, unclean spirit, thou shameful wretch! Very dirty thing thou art to bring such things into my memory." Proud creature that he is, he cannot bear being despised and affronted and taken for what he is worth, so he makes off.

St. Gregory relates of Dacius, Bishop of Milan, that on his way to the city of Constantinople he came to the city of Corinth. There were no lodgings for him except in a house that was deserted, and had been so for many years, because it was haunted by evil spirits. The holy man said, "Let us go there." They went; and about mid-

night, when the holy man was in bed, the devils began to make a great rout, in the guise of various animals, baying like sheep, roaring like lions, grunting like pigs, hissing like snakes. The holy man awoke with the noise and, getting angry with the fiends, said to them: "Oh, how well has come in and well has gone out your levy of forces! You wished to be like God, and you have been turned into beasts, dragons, and serpents; you make a very good imitation of what you in reality are." The evil spirits felt this insult so deeply, St. Gregory says, that they at once disappeared, and never again returned to that house, so that it could ever after be inhabited by all.

St. Athanasius relates of the blessed St. Anthony that he was much troubled by impure temptations, and one day there threw himself at his feet a little black man, filthy and dirty, lamenting how he had overcome many, and "by you alone I am rejected with scorn." The saint asked him: "Who art thou?" "I am," he said, "the spirit of fornication." "Henceforth, then," replied the saint, "I shall make little account of thee, since thou art such a vile and forlorn thing," and the vision at once disappeared. Christ our Redeemer, in the holy Gospel, calls the spirit of fornication *the unclean spirit* (Luke xi. 24). In this way we may affront and insult the devil, treating him for what he is, and making game of him. And sometimes this may be done by giving him a gesture of scorn, without saying anything or bandying reasons with him. Hereby, while nothing is said, much is meant.

CHAPTER IX

Of the Fear of God

WORK out your salvation with fear and trembling, says the Apostle (Phil. ii. 12). One of the things that will help us much to chastity, and generally to keep us in

the grace of God, will be to walk always in holy fear and circumspection, distrusting ourselves, and having recourse to God, and putting our whole trust in Him. Thus says St. Bernard: *In veritate didici nihil aequae efficax esse ad gratiam promerendam, retinendam, recuperandam, quam si omni tempore coram Deo inveniaris non altum sapere, sed timere. Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus* (Prov. xxviii. 14).—"I have found by experience that there is no means so effectual for gaining the grace of God and keeping it, and recovering it if lost, as to walk always in fear before God, not presuming on oneself, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Blessed is the man who is always in fear* (Prov. xxviii. 14)." And, contrariwise, one of the things that have brought even great saints to miserable falls has been trusting in themselves, and living with little fear and caution. *The wise man feareth and turneth aside from evil; the fool taketh leaps in full confidence* (Prov. xiv. 16). The fool is bold and self-confident, and for that reason he falls; but the wise man walks in fear, and so is delivered from evil. He who carries a precious liquor in a very brittle glass vessel, and passes by dangerous places where there is great concourse of people, and winds and tempests blow, if he does not know and fear for the brittleness of the glass, will not carry it with much circumspection, and so will easily break it and spill the liquor he was carrying. But he who knows how brittle the vessel is, and is afraid of its breaking, will guard it well, with nicety and care, and so he travels more safely. That is our case. We hold the liquor and most precious treasure of the grace and gifts of God in earthenware vessels, as the Apostle Paul says (II Cor. iv. 7), which may be broken easily and spill and lose everything; and we walk in the midst of many winds and tempests, and where there are many perilous encounters. Those who do not know nor dread this frailty and weakness, live in a false security and easily come to fall and lose themselves; but those who know and fear for them-

selves walk with great care and consideration how to preserve themselves, and so live more securely; and if there is any security in this life, it is theirs.

How comes it, think you, says St. Bernard, that there are people who have spent their youth in chastity, at the time when they were assailed with severe temptations, and having reached old age have miserably fallen into hideous sins, so foul that they themselves have been shocked at them? The reason is that in youth they lived in holy fear and humility, and when they saw themselves ever so near a fall, they had recourse to God, and were defended by Him; but afterwards, when they were in full possession of chastity, they began to be proud and confident of themselves and think themselves secure; then, when it came to that, they were cast off from the hand of God, and did what it was their own to do, that is, to fall.

The blessed St. Ambrose says that this is the reason why many who served God, and night and day meditated on His law, and crucified their flesh, and kept lusts and incentives to sensuality in check, and were very patient under great losses which they suffered, and very constant under the persecutions which they underwent, in the end have lost all their firmness and high standard of life and come to fall into great miseries; the reason is because they began to trust in their own virtue and holiness and the good works which they did, presuming and resting their confidence inordinately upon them. Thus, those whom the devil has been unable to persuade to the love of manifest vices, or to overthrow by assault of injuries and persecutions, he made softly to fall by lifting them up to presumption on themselves.

Holy Scripture and saints' lives are full of such examples, and the glorious Augustine weeps bitterly over them. "Many we have seen, and from our elders we have heard tell of many others, who had mounted to heaven and set their nest there among the stars. Woe is me, I cannot think

of it without fear, how many of those stars have fallen from heaven! How many that were seated at the table of God and ate the bread of angels have come to desire to fill their bellies with the husks of swine! How many chastities, finer and *fairer than old ivory* (Lam. iv. 7), have been tarnished and turned black as coals!"

Who will not take fright at that instance which Lipe-man relates, of James, a hermit, who, after having served the Lord more than forty years to the utmost length of the most rigorous penance, being now sixty years old, and celebrated for miracles and casting out devils, ended in this. They brought him a girl to cast out a devil from her. He did cast it out. Then they who had brought her did not dare to take her back with them, for fear the devil might cross them on the way, so he allowed her to stay with him. For his trusting and presuming on himself God permitted him to fall into sin. And because one sin calls on and invites another, he did a stupid thing—he murdered the girl and threw her body into a river. Then, to crown all, in despair of the mercy of God, he determined to return to the world and give himself wholly over to that course of vice and sin which so late in life he had entered upon. However, in the end, the mercy of God did not fail him. He entered into himself, did the most rigorous penance for ten years, recovered his former sanctity, and ended a canonized saint.

Who will not take alarm at that other monk, of whom the blessed St. Anthony said: "Today a great pillar is fallen"? Who will not tremble at that? Who will trust in his own holiness, or his saying, "I am a religious"? See how others have fallen, who were better men than you, and had more virtue and gifts of God than you have. The glorious St. Jerome says: "Can it be that you are holier than David, or wiser than Solomon, or stronger than Samson?" Yet all these have fallen; yea, one of Christ's twelve apostles fell, taught in such a school, conversing with such a

Master and such fellow scholars, hearing such discourses and sermons, seeing such deeds of power and miracles! And one of the seven deacons, Nicholas, chosen by the apostles, on whom the Holy Ghost had come down as upon the rest (Acts vi. 1-16), became afterwards not only a heretic, but an heresiarch and father of heretics (Apoc. ii. 6, 15). Who will not fear that old serpent? Remember, says St. Jerome, that our first parents fell, and were cast out of the Paradise where they were enriched by the gifts of God and by original justice, and all that through pride. St. Augustine says that the first man would never have been deceived had he not in his heart departed from God by pride; for true is that saying of the Wise Man, since it is the saying of the Holy Ghost: *Pride goeth before a fall, and before ruin the spirit is lifted up* (Prov. xvi. 18; xviii. 12). Before ruin and perdition there precedes elation of heart.

If these examples of men are not sufficient for you, go on and mount higher; and there in heaven you will find examples of angels who, for pride and presumption, fell from the high estate in which God had created them. *Lo, even his ministers were not steadfast, and in his very angels he found matter of reproach; how much more shall they be consumed as by the moth who dwell in tenements of clay, and whose foundation is in the dust. From morning to evening they shall be undone* (Job iv. 18-20). St. Gregory ponders well to our purpose these words of Job. If in that finest gold there was found so much dross; if in the most noble nature of the angels there was no security nor stability, what shall become of us who dwell in tenements of clay, since clay is easily broken, molders, and falls to pieces! How shall that soul not fear; how shall she presume of herself, she who is in a body like this, which of itself engenders the moth, and in ourselves we have the root of our perdition! The comparison of the moth is very just, says St. Gregory, because, as the moth is born of the

garment and wastes and destroys that very garment whereof it is born, so in us our flesh is as a garment to the soul, which garment also engenders its moth, for thence proceeds the fleshly temptation which makes war on us; and so man comes to be *consumed as by a moth* (Job xiii. 28), when the temptation which springs from his very flesh comes to consume and destroy him.

He says very well *as by the moth*, because, as the moth does harm to the garment and makes no noise, so the moth of this evil and perverse inclination of our flesh, this *fomes peccati*, this food and incentive of sin which we have in us, does harm without noise and almost without our feeling it, for often we do not see it, nor take any account of it, until the harm is done. But if those angelic and heavenly spirits, who had no body to engender in them this moth, nor to make on them continual war and contradiction and consume them, did not last nor persevere in good, what man shall be so bold as to trust in himself, having within him the cause of his temptation and perdition!

Let us, then, learn to walk always in this fear and circumspection; and as for him who does not always walk so, you may well mourn over him, for he is near a fall. It is not I, but the Holy Ghost, Who says: *If thou dost not earnestly keep thyself in the fear of the Lord, thy house will soon be overturned* (Ecclus. xxvii. 4). If you do not walk always in fear and circumspection, shunning danger and guarding yourself against occasions, casting off an evil thought at once and forestalling temptation, you will soon fall.

And let no one deceive himself by saying: "Oh, I do not feel those temptations, those motions and dangers that come of conversing with other people and looking at them; those things make no impression on me." Do not trust in that; the devil seeks in that way to lull you into a sense of security, that afterwards, at the end of some time, when you are off your guard, he may trip you up and throw you

to the ground, or rather, down to hell. The saints here remark that, the more favors God does to a man and the more He imparts His gifts to him, the more should that man walk in fear, because the devils are all the more solicitous and anxious to make him fall. *He is dainty in his food*, said the Prophet Habacuc (i. 16). It is after these men that the evil spirits go; and the devil makes more account of getting one servant of God to fall, one religious who is aiming at perfection, than of many others, men of the world, as will appear by the examples which we shall quote presently. So St. Jerome, in his epistle to Eustochium, exhorting her to look to herself and not be careless in the high state of virginity, says to her: "The higher the state you are in, and the more gifts you have of God, you must not be proud on that account, nor presume on yourself; rather you should walk in greater fear. You are laden with gold, and so should have all the more fear of robbers, and beware of evil and dangerous alleys. Think not to find peace on an earth full of briars and thorns"—*Nolo tibi venire superbiam de proposito, sed timorem. Onusta incedis auro; latro tibi vitandus est. Stadium est vita haec mortalis, hic contendimus ut alibi coronemur. Pacem arbitraris in terra quae tribulos generat et spinas?* There is no security in this life, but warfare; you have always to stand sentinel. We are sailing on a very rough sea in the frail cockleshell boat of this flesh, surrounded by many enemies, who sniff the air and raise all the storms they can to drown us, never wearying, never sleeping, hoping for some occasion to get at us. So the glorious Apostle St. Paul warns us in the words: *Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall* (I Cor. x. 12). *Be ever on the watch*, keeping a good lookout, and take care not to sin (I Cor. xv. 34). If there is anything that can hold us up and secure us, it is this walking always in holy fear and apprehension.

I have heard one thing told of our Society which makes

much to the purpose of what we are saying; I will tell it as I heard it. In the early days of the Society, when Father Peter Faber and Father Anthony de Araoz came from the kingdom of Portugal to Castile—sent by the King of Portugal, Don John III, with the Princess Doña Maria, his daughter, who was to marry the king, Don Philip II, who was then prince royal—the members of our Society had the run of the palace, and heard the confessions of nearly all the dames and ladies of the court. There were not so many old then as now; they were all in their youth. The world was astonished, and with reason, at what is set down for a wonder in the Life of our holy Father Ignatius: "Such youth with such chastity." On the one hand they were seen in the midst of so many dangerous occasions, and on the other with such an aroma of chastity about them. This became the talk of the court. They say that the king one day in conversation with Father Araoz said to him: "I have heard said that the members of the Society carry with them a herb that has the virtue of preserving chastity." Father Araoz, who was a good courtier, answered him: Your majesty's story is true." "For the life of you, tell me what the herb is." "Sire, the herb which the members of the Society carry about with them to preserve chastity is the fear of God." That it is which works this miracle; for it has the virtue of putting the devils to flight, like Toby's fish thrown upon the live coals.

In confirmation of this there makes the saying of the Wise Man: *Upon him that feareth the Lord no harm shall come, for God will preserve him and deliver him from all evil* (Ecclus. xxxiii. 1). And elsewhere he says: *The fear of the Lord driveth away sin and by means thereof men keep aloof from evil* (Prov. xv. 27). Let us, then, always carry this herb with us; let us walk always in this fear; and let us understand that there is no chastity nor sanctity secure but in the holy fear of God. So the Holy Scripture says that we should grow old in it. *Keep the fear of God*

and grow old in it (Ecclus. ii. 6); to give us to understand that not beginners alone, but old servants in the house of the Lord, must live in this fear; not only the guilty, who have good matter for fear, but also the just, who have not done anything so much to cause it. The former fear because they have fallen; the latter that they may not fall. Past ill deeds inspire the former with fear; dangers in the future should inspire the latter. Blessed is the man who walks always in this holy fear (Prov. xxviii. 14).

CHAPTER X

Of the Great Advantages That There Are in This Fear of God

THAT we may the better esteem and appreciate this holy fear, and endeavor always to preserve it in ourselves, we will enumerate some of the great advantages that it contains. In the first place, this fear of God is no source of discouragement or dismay, nor does it make men cowardly and pusillanimous; rather it makes them strong and confident and courageous, as the saints say of humility, for it makes them distrust themselves and put all their confidence in God. St. Gregory says this very well on the text of Job: *Where is thy fear, where thy strength?* (Job iv. 6). Rightly, he says, does Job join fear with strength; for the way of God is just the opposite to the way of the world, where boldness breeds fortitude; and fear, weakness and cowardice. But here it is the other way about: boldness breeds weakness; and fear, great strength, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *In the fear of the Lord is the confidence of our strength* (Prov. xiv. 26). And the reason is that, when one fears God, he finds nothing to fear anywhere in the world; all temporal things he despises and holds them of no account. *He that feareth the Lord will have no dread of anything; he will not fear, because the*

Lord is his hope (Ecclus. xxiv. 16). Fear is a sort of subjection to the object feared, as to a thing that may do us harm. But he that fears God and puts in Him all his confidence, has nothing to fear from the world, nor from the persecutor, nor from death, nor from the devil, nor from hell. Nothing of all these can harm him, nor touch a hair of his head, without God's leave; and that is a source of strength so great that there is nothing like it in all the strong men of the world, for God then is the man's strength. *The Lord is a covering protection to them that fear him* (Psalm xxiv. 14).

Further, this holy fear of the Lord causes no anxiety or bitterness of heart; it is not painful nor fatiguing, but rather it is very pleasant and cheerful. Worldly fear of loss of social position or property, servile fear of hell and death, does cause sadness and melancholy; but the holy and filial fear that good sons have of grieving and offending a dearly-cherished Father, comforts the soul, makes the heart tender, and softens the affections, since it makes us live continually in the love of God, putting up such prayers as this: "Suffer me not, O Lord, ever to be separated from Thee; rather may I die than offend Thee." *The fear of the Lord is glory and exultation, and mirth and a crown of gladness; the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart, and give gladness and joy and length of days. With him that feareth the Lord things shall go well in the end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed* (Ecclus. i. 11-13). With what abundance of words and what variety of sentiments does the Wise Man set forth the joy and gladness that the fear of the Lord carries with it! This is not a fear to make men tremble like slaves for dread of tortures. It is a fear that takes its origin from love of God; so, the more one loves Him, the more does one fear to offend and displease Him. This we see is the attitude of a good son to his father and of an honorable woman to her husband; the more fondly she cherishes him, the harder she works to secure that there

shall never be anything in the house that might give him any pain.

To say in one word all the praises, favors, prerogatives, and pre-eminences that Holy Scripture assigns to the humble, all may be found said of them that fear God, and almost in the same terms. Thus, as Scripture says that God looks and fixes His eyes on the humble and poor, so it says of them that fear God: *The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him* (Ecclus. xxxiv. 19). And as it says that God exalts the humble and fills them with good things, it says the same of them that fear Him. *His mercy is from generation to generation upon them that fear Him*; so says the most holy Queen of Angels in her canticle (Luke i. 50). And holy Judith: *Lord, they that fear Thee shall be great before Thee in all things* (Jud. xvi. 19). And as the saints say that humility is the guardian of all the virtues, and no virtue can stand without humility, so they say also of the fear of God; wherefore the Prophet Isaias calls this holy fear *the treasure-house of the Lord* (Isaias xxxiii. 6), because in it the virtues are well kept and treasured up. And on the contrary they say that, as the ship without weight and ballast is not safe on her voyage, any puff of wind being enough to capsize her, so neither is that soul secure that takes her course without this ballast of fear, fear being the soul's ballast, which corrects the levity of the heart and keeps it firm and constant, so that the wind of favors, human and divine, may not lift it up and capsize it. However rich the soul be, if she lacks this ballast, she cannot go on her way securely.

St. Gregory calls this fear "the anchor of our heart"; *ancora cordis est pondus timoris*. St. Jerome says, "Fear is the safeguard of virtues," while a false security facilitates a fall. And Tertullian: "Fear is the foundation of our salvation. By fearing we shall be on our guard, and by being on our guard we shall be saved; he who walks with circumspection and care may rest secure"—*Timor funda-*

mentum est salutis. Timendo cavebimus, cavendo salvi erimus; qui sollicitus est, is vere poterit esse securus.

Finally, the Wise Man in many chapters of the Sapiential Books goes on extolling the great excellences and marvels of wisdom, and, to sum up and conclude all, he says that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and so says holy Job (xxviii. 28). Thus all that is said of wisdom we may say also of the fear of God. The Wise Man even goes on to say that the fear of God is the *plenitude and consummation of wisdom*, and that its fruits are copious and abundant (Ecclus. i. 20). And he comes to a conclusion in these words: *Great assuredly is he that hath found wisdom, but he is not above him that feareth God. The fear of God overtoppeth and encompasseth all things; blessed is he to whom is given this gift of fear. To what shall we compare him who possesseth so great a gift as this?* (Ecclus. xxv. 13-15).

CHAPTER XI

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the "Spiritual Meadow" it is said: "One of the Fathers of the Thebaid, who was the son of a priest of idols, related to us that, when he was quite a young lad, he used to be with his father in the temple, and often saw how his father offered sacrifices to his idol. One time he came in secretly behind his father, and saw Satan seated on a high platform, and all his hellish rabble around him, and one of his chief officers came and paid obeisance to him. Satan said to him: 'Whence comest thou?' He said: 'I have been in such and such a province, and I have raised in it many wars and quarrels, along with much shedding of blood, and I have come to tell you.' Satan asked him: 'And how much time hast thou spent in doing this?' He answered, 'Thirty

days.' Satan then ordered him to be scourged, saying that he had spent much and done little. After that there came another, and made his obeisance to the infernal captain, who asked him: 'And thou, whence dost thou come?' He answered: 'I have been at sea, and have raised many storms, and sunk many ships, and drowned many men, and have come to give thee an account of it.' He asked: 'How much time has thou taken to do that?' He answered, 'Twenty days.' He ordered him to be scourged for having done so little in twenty days. A third came and paid his obeisance, and Satan asked him: 'Thou, where hast thou been?' He answered: 'I have been to such and such a city, where there was a marriage being celebrated, and I set them by the ears, and many were killed, and among them the bridegroom himself.' Satan said: 'And how long didst thou take?' 'Only ten days.' And notwithstanding all the mischief that he had made, he ordered him to be scourged, saying: 'Thou oughtest to have done many more things in ten days.' Things being at this, there came another, and paid obeisance to his evil chief, who asked him: 'Whence comest thou?' 'I come from the desert, where for forty years I have been tempting and assailing one monk, and at the end of that time, only last night, I overcame him, and made him fall into the sin of fornication.' When he heard this, Satan rose up and kissed him, and took the crown that he wore and put it on his head, and made him sit on a seat by his side, and said to him: 'Thou hast done a grand piece of work.' When I heard this, I said: 'Truly great and excellent is the religion and order of monks.' So I left my parents' house, and became a monk." Here note, by the way, that from a source whence others conceive an ill opinion of religious, because some religious has fallen into some weakness, this man conceived, and rightly conceived, a higher opinion of religious life, and embraced it.

In the Lives of the Fathers we read that a holy hermit

was carried by an angel to a place where there was a monastery of religious, and saw there a multitude of devils, fluttering about like flies in all the offices and places of the monastery. Then, going to the market place of the city, he saw only one solitary devil, and he had no work, but was sitting idle on the city gate. He asked the reason of this, and the angel, his guide, told him that those people in the city all did what the devil wanted, and therefore one devil was enough for all; but in the monastery all were doing their best to resist the devil, and that was the reason why so many devils were at them to tempt them and make them fall.

Palladius recounts a memorable example, which is related also in the Lives of the Fathers, of a monk who for many years had exercised himself in good works and holy exercises proper to a religious, and had made great progress. At the end of that time he gave way to vain complacency in himself and boasting. Wherefore God permitted him miserably to fall into a sin of impurity with the devil, who appeared to him in the form of a very handsome woman, who was wandering lost in the desert. He readily gave her welcome, and talked at length with her, laughing and holding her by the hand. Finally he quite gave himself up to sin with her; and when he would fain have put it in act, the figure disappeared in his arms with a loud shriek, over which were heard loud peals of laughter from many devils, floating in the air and saying to him: "O monk, monk, who didst raise and exalt thyself to the heavens, how hast thou sunk into the abyss; learn, then, more from today that he who exalts himself shall be humbled." With these words it seemed that the devils were scoffing at him and making game of him. The wretched man stopped not there, but, having spent that night and the following day in loud lamentations and shame, he fell into despair, went back into the world, and gave reins to his vicious inclinations.

St. John Climacus tells the story, which we referred to above, of a youth of whom we read in the Lives of the Fathers that he attained so high a degree of virtue as to have empire over wild beasts, whom he made serve the monks in the monastery. St. Anthony likened him to a richly laden vessel on the high seas, whose end he could not answer for. Now this youth, so fervent and so holy, came to fall miserably. While he was weeping over his sin, he said to some monks who came that way: "Tell the old man," that is, St. Anthony, "to pray to God for me that He will vouchsafe to grant me ten days to do penance." On hearing this, the old man wept bitterly, and said with great grief of heart: "A great pillar of the Church has fallen today." At the end of five days the monk above-mentioned died. Thus he who at first, says St. John Climacus, had empire over wild beasts, was in the end overthrown and mocked by most cruel savages, and he who a little before had for nourishment the bread of heaven, came afterwards to seek his nourishment in mire and filth. Father Anthony, in his great prudence, would not state clearly the nature of his fall, for he knew that it was fornication.

Father Master Avila quotes an instance of a holy hermit to whom God had granted to know the great danger to which he lay exposed in this life; and, considering that, he put over his head a hood of mourning and covered his face in such manner that he could see nothing but the ground he was about to tread upon, and never more would speak to man, and never more took his eyes off the ground, weeping to see himself in such danger as man lives in. And when there came many people to see him in his cell out of curiosity for the great change that had come over him, and asked the reason of this novelty and of the extreme course he had so suddenly taken, he never answered anything else but: "Let me alone, because I am a man." Another saint used to say: "Woe is me, because I am still capable of offending God mortally."

TWENTY-FIRST TREATISE

ON THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE



CHAPTER I

Of the Excellence of the Virtue of Obedience

OBEDIENCE is better than victims, and to hearken to command than to offer the fat of rams (I Kings xv. 22). The historical occasion is well known in which these words were uttered. It was when King Saul disobeyed the commandment given him by God to destroy Amalek and leave nothing alive, and he kept the better portion of the spoil for sacrifice. The Prophet Samuel said to him on the part of God: *Doth God want holocausts and victims, and not rather obedience to the voice of the Lord?* Not at all; *for obedience is better than sacrifice, and better is it to hear and obey God than to offer him the fat of rams.* Resting on this passage, and on many others in Holy Writ where obedience is greatly extolled and the high value that God sets on it, the saints utter many commendations of this virtue. St. Augustine, in various places, treats the question why God gave command to man not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. His first answer is that it was to show and give men to understand the excellence and value of this virtue of obedience, and the great evil of disobedience. And this was well shown by the event. For the evil and hardship that followed upon sin were not caused by the fruit of the tree. The tree was not evil nor harmful of itself, but good; God had created all things very good, and had no mind to put any evil thing in Paradise. It was disobedience, and the violation of God's commandment and the obedience due to Him, that made the evil. So St. Augustine says that nothing could better show the great evil of disobedience than the sight of the evil that came upon man by the mere eating, against the commandment of God, of a thing that had no harm in it, and could have done harm to nobody, but for the eating of it being forbidden. Hereby their fault is well shown up who dare to disobey

and fail in an observance because it is a slight matter. The sin is not in the thing, but in the disobedience; and that holds even when the thing is slight. St. Augustine gives a second reason for this prohibition. Man being created to serve God, it was fitting that God should impose upon him some precept prohibitive of something, that he might recognize that he had a master, and hold himself for a subject. Unless something were forbidden him and something commanded, he would have had no matter in which to subject himself and recognize that he had a master. The virtue of obedience was meant to be a means for him to recognize God and merit thereby. And he goes on saying many good things in praise of this virtue.

One of the reasons why God became man, he says, was to teach us and commend to us this virtue of obedience, and give us an example thereof. Man had been disobedient unto death; the Son of God came to be obedient even unto death. The gate of heaven had been closed to us, and the grace of God lost, by the disobedience of Adam; it was opened to us by the obedience of Christ. And in the reward and glory of the humanity of Christ, the saint says that there also the Lord wished to show us the virtue and merit of obedience by crowning it with such sublime glory. *He made himself obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross, for which cause God hath exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth* (Phil. ii. 8-10).

Many are the excellences and grand things that the saints say of this virtue, but here we will mention only one, which will be sufficient for us; and that is, that it is the most proper and principal virtue of the religious. St. Thomas, who carries things with the rigor of the schools, treats this question, whether the vow of obedience is the chief of the three vows that we make in religion. And he answers, Yes; and gives three very good and profitable reasons for it.

The first is, because by the vow of obedience a man gives and offers to God more than by the other vows. By the vow of poverty a man offers to God his possessions and riches; by the vow of chastity, his own body; but by the vow of obedience he offers his own will and judgment, offering himself entirely to God, which is more than all the rest. And so says St. Jerome: "To leave gold and riches is the part of beginners; many philosophers have done that. But to offer oneself and give oneself over entirely to God is proper to Christians; it is an apostolic work because it is an imitation of the apostles who did the like"—*Aurum depocere incipientium est, non perfectorum; fecit hoc Crates Thebanus, fecit Antisthenes: seipsum offerre Deo proprium Christianorum est et apostolorum*. And the saint dwells upon the fact that Christ did not say: *Verily I say to you that ye who have left all things shall sit on twelve thrones*, but *ye who have followed me* (Mark xix. 28). To follow Christ is the most perfect thing; and in it, as St. Thomas says, is included the counsel of obedience, since he who obeys follows the will and opinion of another.

The second reason is, because the vow of obedience includes and comprises under itself the other vows of religion, while itself is not included or comprised under them. Though the religious binds himself by a particular vow to observe chastity and poverty, yet these virtues also fall under obedience, to which virtue it is proper to guard these and many others. So very true is this that in some ancient orders, as the Carthusians and Benedictines, in their profession they make express mention only of the vow of obedience: "I promise obedience according to the rule." And under that is understood the vow of chastity and poverty, according to the statutes and custom of the order.

The third reason is, because a thing is better and more perfect, the nearer it approaches and conducts us to its end. Now, obedience is that which unites religious most closely with the end of their order, since it is that which tells and

commands them to practise the things which are directed to gain the end thereof. Thus it bids us occupy ourselves with our own spiritual advancement and that of our neighbor, to attend to our meditation and mortification, to engage in hearing confessions, preaching, teaching Christian doctrine, and all other ministries necessary for the helping of souls; and so in other orders.

Hence St. Thomas draws a very important conclusion. It is that the vow of obedience is the most essential thing in religion; it is that which makes a religious and constitutes him in the state of religion. St. Bonaventure agrees with this, and says that all the perfection of a religious consists in entirely giving up his own will and following obedience; and for that reason we make the vows of poverty and chastity, that by relinquishing property and fleshly delights and care of house and family we may be the lighter and the more disengaged to fulfil the vow of obedience, as being the principal thing. Little will it profit you, he says, to have given up property and wealth if you do not also give up your own will and follow the will of obedience.

Surius relates some notable sayings of St. Fulgentius Bishop, who was abbot of a monastery. This is one of them, dealing with obedience: "Do you know," he says, "who are true religious? They who have no will of their own, but give themselves up, prompt and indifferent, for anything that the superior shall command them. This it is to be a religious, neither to will nor to will not." He does not say that you will be a religious if you take many disciplines, or wear rough hairshirts, or are strong enough to work hard all day long, or be a great doctor or preacher, but if you be very obedient and have no will of your own. *Illos veros monachos esse, qui mortificatis voluntatibus suis parati essent nihil velle, nihil nolle, sed abbatis tantummodo consilia vel praecepta servare.*

Thus obedience is the virtue most essential in religion, the virtue that makes one be a religious. It is that which pleases God more than sacrifice and victims; in that is included and contained poverty, chastity, and all other virtues. If you are obedient, you will be poor, chaste, humble, silent, suffering, mortified, and master of all virtues. And this is no exaggeration, but downright truth. For virtues are acquired and gained by practising their acts, and that is the way in which God means to give them to us; now it is just this practice that obedience gives us. All the rules that we have, and all the orders of obedience given us, are an exercise of virtues. Let yourself be carried by obedience, and embrace heartily all the occasions that are offered you. Sometimes they will exercise you in patience, sometimes in humility, sometimes in poverty, sometimes in temperance, sometimes in charity, and in this way you will go growing in all virtues as you grow in obedience. That is what our Father says: "As this virtue shall flourish, so will all other virtues flourish and bear the fruit that I look for in your souls." It is the common doctrine of the saints to call this virtue the mother and prime source of all virtues. "A very great virtue," St. Augustine says, "and what we may call the prime source and mother of all the rest." And St. Gregory: "Obedience is the one virtue that inserts and engenders in the soul all other virtues and, after inserting, preserves them." So they explain that saying of Proverbs: *The obedient man shall speak of victories* (Prov. xxi. 28); that is how St. Gregory and St. Bernard read the text. The obedient man shall gain not one, but many victories. He will gain all virtues who shall be thoroughly obedient. If, then, you wish for a short and compendious lesson how to advance much and attain to perfection in a little time, it is this: Take care to be very obedient. That is a very short road, quite a short cut to that end. So says St. Jerome: "O happy and abundant grace of obedience, wherein is contained the sum of all virtues! By the simple method of

obeying in all things that obedience shall command, in a short time one will find himself perfect and full of virtues"—*O felix et abundans gratia! In obedientia summa virtutum inclusa est; nam simplici gressu hominem ducit ad Christum.*

St. John Climacus says that, coming to a monastery, he saw white-haired old men, of venerable aspect, who were like children, prompt and ready to obey and run about here and there; some of them had been fifty years serving under the standard of obedience. He asked them what comfort and fruit they had found from such great obedience and toil. Some answered that they had thereby attained to the depth of humility, and thereby were delivered from many assaults of the enemy; others, that they had thereby come to lose all sense of injury and insult. Thus obedience is a means of gaining all virtues; and, therefore, those ancient Fathers took it for a good sign of anyone's being on the road to perfection if they saw him quite subject and obedient to his spiritual father.

St. Dorotheus tells of his disciple Dositheus that, being a youth of noble birth and delicate breeding, he was seized with fear of judgment and the strict account that he had to render to God. God fulfilled in him the petition of the prophet: *Pierce my flesh with thy fear; I have been afraid of thy judgments* (Psalm cxviii. 120). Smitten and pierced with this fear, he entered religion to be able to render a good account of himself. He was of a weak constitution, and could not follow the community; he could not rise for matins, nor eat the same food as the rest. As he could not do this, he deliberated within himself and resolved to devote himself entirely to obedience, serving with the greatest alacrity and diligence in the guest house and in other offices of humility. Within five years he died of consumption. God revealed to the abbot of the monastery that this youth had attained the reward of Paul and Anthony. The monks complained to God, saying: "Where, O Lord, is Thy justice,

that Thou wouldst have a man who never fasted, and was reared in luxury, set on a level with us, who bear the full burden of religion—*Pondus diei et aestus* (Matt. xx. 12)? What are we the better for all the labor we have gone through?" God answered that they did not know the merit and value of obedience, and that thereby this youth had in a short time merited more than others with their great austerities.

CHAPTER II

Of the Need That We Have of the Virtue of Obedience

THE blessed St. Jerome, exhorting religious to obey their superior, the better to persuade them shows at length by many examples the need there is in all cases of following and obeying one superior. In the political constitution of the world we see that there is one emperor, one king, one supreme judge of a province. When Rome was founded, even by two brothers, a joint reign of them both was found impossible, but one slew the other. Jacob and Esau, even in their mother's womb, wrestled and warred with one another, which was to come out first. In the ecclesiastical hierarchy we see that all is reduced to one vicar of Christ, and in every district and diocese there is one sole bishop and prelate. In all things we see the necessity of this subordination and subjection to one. In an army, however great it may be, there is always one captain general, whom all obey; on board every ship there is one captain, and there would be great disunion and confusion in the crew, nor would they ever reach port, if everyone sought to steer and guide the ship according to his own fancy, and there were not one whose word was law. And even in the smallest house, though it be but a poor cottage, there must be one whom the rest obey; and without that provision noth-

ing can be preserved, nothing last long, neither house, nor city, nor kingdom. *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be left desolate* (Luke xi. 17). And we see this in all things, not only in rational creatures, as in men and angels—in the latter there is subordination of one hierarchy to another—but also among brute beasts, who have a captain and guide whom they follow. Bees have their officers, and one is the chief, the queen bee, whom they all acknowledge and obey. Going as far as cranes, we find that those birds form up in a squadron and fall into rank, making a letter Y, or Greek capital Upsilon, and so they go, all following one. The heavenly spheres also are under the *primum mobile*, or prime mover, and follow its movement. And not to weary you with more examples, says St. Jerome, what I want you to gather from all this is that you should understand how it behooves you to live under the obedience of a prelate, and in company with many religious brethren, servants of God, who by their example help and encourage you to your end.

Our Father, though he would have us grow in all virtues and spiritual graces, in this particularly demands of us great perfection. He desires that, as other orders are marked and distinguished, some by poverty, others by penances and austerities, others by choir, others by enclosure, so the Society should be distinguished by the virtue of obedience, and that we should all make it our endeavor to mark and render ourselves conspicuous thereby, understanding that on this single point pivots all the good of the Society. And with much reason does our Father ask that of us; because the end of the Society, after its own perfection, is the spiritual advancement of its neighbor, and to help souls to salvation all the world over. Then its members must be ready and on the alert, always and instantly to go all the world over to exercise their ministries, like light horsemen riding to the rescue where the need is greatest. And this is the meaning of the fourth

vow which the professed make of obeying the sovereign pontiff in regard of missions; that is, to go to any part of the world where the sovereign pontiff sends them, whether it be to a Christian land or among infidels or heretics, without making any excuse and without asking for their journey-money. And all must show this promptitude and indifference, not only for the missions to which the sovereign pontiff sends them, but also for wherever their immediate superiors send them. And besides that, they must be ready to take up any office or ministry, and do anything else commanded them. For this a great stock of obedience is necessary, seeing that in the Society there is such a diversity of occupations, ministries, and grades, some higher than others. It was a marvelous artifice and contrivance of our Father to insist so much on obedience, and ask us to signalize ourselves and come forward in that line, because he knew that many difficulties would cross our path, and that we should be pulled in all directions, and any a hash would be made of us.

A father of the Society used to say a thing that I wish we could all say and feel. He said: "I am not afraid of any order of obedience, because I am ready and prepared to do anything whatsoever that obedience shall command me." He said well, and it is a truth well borne out by experience. A religious who is mortified, prompt and indifferent to do anything that they may command him, has nothing to fear from any order of obedience or from any superior, nor does he mind whether his superior be Pedro or Sancho, or of this or that condition of life. A good religious is independent of these things; to be dependent upon them and afraid of them argues imperfection. On the saying of St. Paul: *Wouldst thou not fear the justice? Do well, and thou shalt have praise from him* (Rom. xiii. 3-4), St. Chrysostom says: "The thief and the malefactor is afraid of the justice and turns pale at the sight of the constable, thinking that he is after him; but it is not the prince or the justice that

causes this fear, but only his own wickedness and evil conscience. Would you have no fear of king or justice? Live a good life, and not only shall you not fear him, but you shall have much praise from him." So it is also here in religion. Those fears and alarms are not caused by the superior, but by your own imperfection and want of mortification. Would you be fearless and never panic-stricken in religion? Be thoroughly obedient and aim at thorough indifference and resignation in all things. He who lives in this way shall enjoy much peace, great rest and tranquillity, and religious life will be for him a paradise on earth.

CHAPTER III

Of the First Degree of Obedience

OUR Father, speaking of obedience in the Third Part of the Constitutions, says: "It is very expedient for spiritual advancement, and quite necessary, that all should give themselves up to perfect obedience." And he goes on explaining what this perfect obedience is. He says that it should not only be in the exterior execution, carrying out in act the order given, which is the first degree of obedience, but it should extend also to the will and the heart, conforming our will to that of the superior, willing and willing not as he wills and wills not, which is the second degree of obedience. And we are not to stop here, but pass on further, conforming our judgment also to that of the superior, so that you should think as the superior thinks, and judge that the order given is a good order, which is the third degree of obedience. When there is this conformity in deed, will, and understanding, then the obedience will be perfect and entire; and if any of these conditions be wanting, it will be neither perfect nor entire.

Starting with the first degree, we must be very diligent and punctual in the carrying out of an order of obedience.

St. Basil asks with what care and diligence we should apply ourselves to the things we are commanded, and answers that it should be with the same diligence wherewith a man who greatly loves his own life applies himself to the things necessary to preserve it, or as a hungry man sets about his dinner. Even with greater diligence, he says, inasmuch as life everlasting, which is earned by obedience, is more noble and excellent than temporal life. The blessed St. Bernard says: "The truly obedient man knows no such thing as delay, or 'Oh, tomorrow' or 'Afterwards,' nor does he say 'I'll go about it presently,' as lazy people do; but he applies his hearing to understand the order, his feet to go and fulfil it, his hands to put it in execution, and so punctually does he carry it out that he seems to forestall and get the start of him who gives the order"—*Fidelis obediens nescit moras, fugit crastinum, ignorat tarditatem, praecepit praeipientem, parat oculos visui, aures auditui, linguam voci, manus operi, itineri pedes, totum se colligit ut imperantis colligat voluntatem.*

Our Father, speaking of putting the order into execution, and the punctuality which we should observe in obedience, says that we should be as prompt in answering the bell or the voice of the superior as if the signal came from Christ our Lord Himself. We should omit finishing any work we have commenced, leaving even a letter of the alphabet incomplete. He says two things: first, that, when we hear the bell or the voice of the superior, we should reckon that it is the voice of God that we hear. A good reflection for the occasion is to think of the saying of the three Wise Men Kings, when they saw the star that appeared to them: *This is the sign of the great king; let us go and adore and offer our gifts.* (Epiphany Office). So, on hearing the bell or the voice of the superior, it is good to say: "There is the voice of God; let us go at once to obey." The second thing, he says, is that we should leave unfinished the letter of the alphabet that we have begun

to form. Cassian, speaking of the monks' occupations, says that they were all occupied, this one in writing out his thoughts on pious subjects, that one in meditation, that other in copying manuscripts; but as soon as they heard the bell or the voice of the superior, they rushed out of their cells *certatim*, vying with one another who should answer the call first, in such haste that he who was writing omitted to finish the letter of the alphabet that he had begun. They made obedience of more account than all the rest, preferring it not only to the manual work they were doing, but also to reading and prayer and recollection and all other works; and so they left them, not to be wanting in obedience even in the least point, as if they heard the voice of God. St. Benedict also puts this teaching in his rule, and from those authorities our Father drew it.

To give us to understand how pleasing to Him is this punctual obedience, whereby we leave the letter of the alphabet unfinished, our Lord has been pleased often to confirm it by miracles, as in the case of the monk who, when the bell rang to a duty of obedience when he was writing, left the letter of the alphabet that he had begun to form, and when he returned, found it finished, and the second half done in gold. To another monk the Child Jesus had appeared, very beautiful and resplendent, when they rang for vespers. He at once left and went to the call of obedience; when the duty was over, he returned to his cell and found the Child there, Who said to him: "Because thou didst go, thou hast found Me; if thou hadst not gone, I should have gone hence at once." Of another, Ruysbroeck relates that he found the Child Whom he had left, in the form of a most beautiful youth, Who said to him: "So much have I grown in thy soul by the punctuality of thy obedience." The devil, on the contrary, when he cannot prevent our obedience altogether, endeavors to make us unpunctual in obeying, so that he may have some part in it, and walk off with at least a little bit of the work between

the time that the bell rings and you get up and go about it. He seeks to carry off the flower and beginning of our actions and levy toll on them; thus he tries to keep you in bed just a little after the bell has rung for you to get up, and that you should finish the letter begun when you were writing, and even sometimes the argument and clause, under plea of not forgetting it. But it should be our endeavor to give to God the whole work entirely, with the commencement and bloom thereof, which renders the fruit very pleasant, and not to give it when the bloom is off and the flower is fallen.

Our Father wishes more of us in regard of this exterior obedience. He wishes that we should in this way meet not only the sound of the bell and the voice of the superior, but also any sign and signification of his will. "Let all," he says, "lay themselves out for obedience, and make it their effort to excel therein, not only in things of obligation, but also in others where but a sign of the will of the superior is apparent, without any express command." Albertus Magnus, speaking of obedience, says: "The truly obedient man never waits to be told a thing; but what he knows or believes to be the mere wish of his superior, he fervently puts into execution as though it were a command." He gives as an example Christ our Lord and Master, Who took it for a precept and command to die for men, seeing that such was the will and good pleasure of His eternal Father.

Cassian tells of the ancient monks that their obedience was so great that they not only obeyed at the voice of the superior, but at any sign whatever of his will, so that they seemed in some sort to divine and prognosticate the will of the superior, doing what he wanted before he commanded them. That is what St. Bernard says, that the thoroughly obedient man anticipates and forestalls the superior who commands him—*praecipit praecipientem*—doing what the superior wants before he orders it.

Our Father used to say that there were three sorts of

obedience. One is when they command me in virtue of obedience, and that is good; the second is when they direct me to do this or that, and that is better, because it shows greater subjection and promptitude of will to do a thing on a simple direction than to wait for an order in virtue of holy obedience; the third sort of obedience is when I do this or that upon becoming aware of some sign of the superior's will, though he does not command or direct me expressly. This obedience, he says, is much more perfect and agreeable to God. There in the world the servant and attendant who at half a sign understands the will of his master, and sets to work to put it in execution, pleases and satisfies his master more than another who has to be told everything expressly. *Acceptable to the king is an intelligent servant* (Prov. xiv. 35). So it is also here in obedience. He who meets the occasion at once upon any signification of the will of the superior is the better and more perfect subject, and the more agreeable and satisfactory to superiors and to God. And this is the teaching of St. Thomas, who, speaking of obedience, says that, when anywise one comes to understand the will of the superior, that is a tacit precept and command, and then is better seen the readiness of the subject to obey. So we should endeavor to stretch our obedience to this point. For it happens sometimes, and even often, that the superior does not like to order the thing expressly, in order to act with great gentleness and not mortify the subject, or for not knowing how he will take the order; in that case, when there is no doubt of the will of the superior, it would be a great fault not to meet him half way, and offer oneself for the obedience.

God was seeking someone to send to Jerusalem to preach, and said in the hearing of Isaias: *Whom shall I send, and who will go on this mission?* (Isaias vi. 8). Isaias understood that He meant it for an invitation to him, and at once offered himself: *Lo, here I am, send me.* So it is right that we should take the invitation to ourselves and offer

ourselves, when there is any word or sign making the superior's will clear.

We might quote many examples teaching us the readiness and smartness which we should show in obedience. Among them a very good one is what Holy Scripture relates of the Prophet Samuel, when he was a youth serving in the Temple as sacristan to the priest Heli. One night he was sleeping in the Temple, and God called him in one word, *Samuel, Samuel*, to reveal to him the chastisement which He intended to inflict on Heli. Samuel awoke at the word and, as he did not understand such speech, since hitherto the Lord had not spoken to him nor revealed anything to him, he thought that his priest Heli was calling him, so he rose quickly and went at a run to him: *Here I am, for thou hast called me*. Heli told him he had not called him: *I did not call thee, my son; go back and sleep*. He went back to bed and to sleep, and God called him a second time; he awoke and thought that Heli was calling him, for he could not think of anyone else who could be calling; so he rose and ran to him, as the first time. Heli thought he must be dreaming, and told him again to go to bed. He went back to bed and to sleep. God called him a third time; he awoke, and went straight to his superior, thinking that he had called him: *Here I am, sir, since thou hast called me*. Then Heli realized that it must be God calling him, to reveal him something, and said to him: "Go back, child, and sleep; and if again thou hear them calling thee, remain where thou art, and say: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth* (I Kings iii. 9). He went back to bed and to sleep, and God called him again, *Samuel, Samuel*. He awoke at the voice, and, as he was instructed, said: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth*. Then God spoke and revealed to him what He wished. Here let us consider the obedience and great readiness of Samuel, in that, though he found himself balked the first and second time, and Heli himself had told him that he was not calling him, and that he should go back to

sleep, and he could not think of anyone else who could possibly be calling him, nevertheless he got up again a second and third time, and went to Heli to see what his commands were. This is the readiness and alacrity with which we should meet and obey our superiors.

That is also a good example which Holy Writ brings to our consideration, of Abraham's prompt obedience when God bade him sacrifice his only son Isaac. We are told that he did not wait for the morrow, but at once *rising at night* (Gen. xxii. 3), before the break of day, on receiving the command, he put himself on the way, ready to execute the order, and an order so difficult, Holy Writ further observes, that he left his servants at the foot of the mountain and would not take them with him, that there might be no one who could possibly hinder his carrying out the obedience.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Second Degree of Obedience

THE second degree of obedience consists in conforming our will to that of the superior, and having no other will, neither choosing nor refusing except what the superior wills or wills not. It is the tritest and commonest saying that we have in religious life; it is on this presupposition that we all enter that state. It is the first principle and foundation. It is told to all, and put before everyone who has a mind to enter religion: "See, now, you do not come here to do your own will, but another's." And all say, "I know that already." As we say it, and as it was said to us, so it is in truth. This is being a religious and living under obedience. St. John Climacus says: "Obedience is the tomb of self-will, and the awakener of humility. In entering religion we have to take account that we are burying our own will, and that henceforth we must in all things follow that of the superior."

Our Father adds that we must be so disposed, even though they command us things difficult and repugnant to sense. It is rather for these things particularly that we should show much readiness, when we are ordered to do them, for in them true obedience is shown, as the saints commonly observe. When they order us what we like and what is conformable to our inclination and will, obedience cannot be well seen, for haply it is our own taste and inclination that carries us thereto rather than the will of God and obedience. But when the thing ordered is difficult, and repugnant to our sensuality and our flesh, and we embrace it with great alacrity, then obedience is very visible; we are there quite sure and satisfied that we are not seeking ourselves, but purely God and obedience. Hence that is an excellent praiseworthy practice that we see in some religious, who, when they are ordered to take up offices and ministries for which they have great taste, are suspicious of themselves and feel a holy pain and anxiety, saying: "I don't know whether I am gaining any merit by this, for methinks I am doing it of my own will," and they lay their anxiety before their superior once or twice. Contrariwise, when they are ordered something for which they feel no inclination, but rather difficulty and repugnance, then they are much consoled, thinking that therein they may well be satisfied that they are not doing their own will, nor seeking themselves, but God alone. This is a very good and safe way of proceeding.

St. Gregory says: "When they order us to do high and honorable things, there ought to be nothing of our own in the performance, but we should take such functions up purely because they are commanded us and because such is the will of God. But when difficult, lowly, and humble work is enjoined us, there ought to be something of our own there, because to such things we should endeavor to bend our inclinations and likings, and take them up with much promptitude and good will"—*Debet obedientia in adversis ex*

suo aliquid habere, et in prosperis ex suo aliquid omnino non habere. He who shall act in this way will have good grounds for believing and being satisfied that in other things also, commanded him by obedience, even though they are to his liking, he is doing the will of God and not his own. But he who does not obey with alacrity and good will in lowly, humiliating, and laborious offices, causing him sensible difficulty and repugnance, may well fear that in other things also that he does that are to his taste and inclination, he is not doing the will of God either, but his own. This is one of the signs whereby we may know when we are seeking ourselves in what we do, and when we seek purely the will of God.

Hence it follows that he is no obedient man whose desire and aim it is to get the superior to order him what is to his taste and to fall in with his will, and is ready to do that, but unready for other things. Our Father says very well: "It is a great self-deceit, and a mark of an understanding blinded by self-love, to think that obedience is being kept when the subject contrives to bring the superior over to what he himself wants." And he quotes St. Bernard's saying: "Whoever openly or by stealth gets his spiritual father to order what he himself wishes, deceives and flatters himself idly if he reckons on his obedience and plumes himself thereon, for it is not he that obeys the superior, but the superior that obeys him; nor does he do the superior's will, but the superior does his." This point is commonly insisted on and well known; still, that is no reason for passing it lightly over, since it is one of the most important and chief points that there are in this matter, and one of the things that religious have most to dread. Be very much afraid of the superior's putting upon you any office, ministry, or occupation simply because you desired and tried for it, and showed an ill countenance at something else that he hinted to you, and would rather you had done. Perhaps you will think afterwards that you have

done wonders, and are laden with good works, because you have worked hard; and you will find that you have been befooled and void of all merit before God because you have done your own will, and not that of God. He may answer you in the words of Isaias (lvii. 1-3) : *Why have we fasted, labored, and wearied ourselves so much, and all in vain?* Do you know why? Because you did your own will therein.

This passage of Isaias is quoted by St. Bernard to this effect, and he adds: "A great evil is self-will, since it makes your good works not to be good in you"—*Grande malum propria voluntas, qua fit ut bona tua tibi bona non sint*. In another place he further enlarges on this topic. Referring to the occasion when Christ our Redeemer appeared to St. Paul, and threw him from his horse and converted him, and scales fell from the eyes of his soul, and with the light that he received from heaven he said: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts ix. 6), St. Bernard says: "The sign of a perfect conversion, the sign of a man's having renounced the world in good earnest and determined to follow Christ, is when he comes to say with the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* A short speech, but compendious and pregnant with meaning, lively, to the point, and worthy of all consideration. Oh, how few there are at this day who attain to this perfection of obedience—that is, who have so far given up their own will that they never seek or claim or desire to have their own way in anything, only God's way, saying ever with the Apostle: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* and with the Royal Prophet: *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* (Psalm lvi. 8), it is disposed and prepared to do Thy will. Oh, the pity of it! We find today many more imitators of that blind man in the Gospel than of the new-made Apostle. *Heu plures habemus evangelici illius caeci quam novi Apostoli imitatores*. The Savior of the world asked that blind man: *What wouldst thou have me do for Thee?* (Mark x. 51). Oh, how great is Thy mercy, O Lord; how kind Thou art to us! How

great Thy loving-kindness in our regard! When was it ever the usage for the master to inquire the will of the servant that he might do it? It is quite clear that that man was blind, since he did not consider, did not cry out in amazement at such a question from the mouth of Christ, even as the Apostle Peter did when Christ offered to wash his feet (John xiii. 6), and St. John when he saw Him coming for baptism (Matt. iii. 14). If he had not been blind, he should have cried out: 'Never, please God! It is for Thee, O Lord, to tell me what Thou wouldst have me do, since so it is fitting that I should do Thy will, and not Thou mine'—*Vere caecus ille, quia non consideravit, non expavit, non exclamavit: Absit hoc, Domine; tu magis dic quid me facere velis; sic enim decet, sic omnino dignum est, non meam a te, sed a me tuam quaeri et fieri voluntatem.* In this way nowadays there are many religious who have to be asked: *What wouldst thou have me do with thee?*" Thus far St. Bernard. The superior has to put on his thinking-cap and consider: "What would So-and-So like? What will he take to?" whereas it ought to be the other way about; subjects should come inquiring the will of the superior and wanting to know his wishes, to act accordingly, since it is for that that they came into religion, and not for the superior to come over to their will and order what they like, for that is neither obedience nor religion.

CHAPTER V

Of the Third Degree of Obedience

THE third degree of obedience consists in conforming our understanding and judgment to the judgment and understanding of the superior, having not only one will with him, but also one opinion with his opinion, judging that what he orders is well ordered, subjecting our judgment to his, and taking his for the rule of ours. To under-

stand the necessity of this degree of obedience, that were enough which we said at the outset, that without it obedience will never be perfect nor entire. The saints say that obedience is a most perfect holocaust, in which the whole man, without any division of himself or any reservation of anything for himself, offers himself to his Creator and Lord in the fire of charity by the hands of his ministers. That was the difference in the Old Law between a holocaust and other sacrifices, that in other sacrifices part was burned in honor of God and part was kept back for the support of the priests and ministers of the Temple; but the holocaust was wholly consumed in the fire—nothing of it was reserved or kept back. If, then, you do not obey with the understanding, there will be then no holocaust, no entire and perfect obedience, since you fail to offer the chiefest and noblest part of your being, your understanding and judgment. So our Father used to say that those who obeyed with the will only, and not with the judgment, had only one foot in religion.

The blessed St. Bernard explains what and how this obedience of the understanding should be, by following up the history of the conversion of St. Paul and applying it hereto. When St. Paul, bewildered at the light from heaven, was converted and said: *Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?* the Lord answered: *Go into the city, and there they will tell thee what thou art to do* (Acts ix. 7). On this plan and to this purpose it was that you entered religion. It was not without a high and divine purpose that God put fear and alarm about your salvation into you, and gave you a great desire to serve His Majesty, and to that end inspired you to enter this city, this school of virtue. Here they will tell you what you are to do, and what God requires of you. Going on with the story, we are told how, when St. Paul came into the city, though his eyes were open, he saw nothing, but was carried and led by others. That is the pattern and model of the obedience which a religious should

observe. The perfection of it consists in this, that, though your eyes are open, you do not see or judge of anything, but let yourself be carried and guided by your superiors, putting yourself entirely in their hands. Take care not to open your eyes to your cost, as Adam opened his.

Holy Writ says of our first parents that, after they had sinned, their eyes were opened and they knew that they were naked and were greatly ashamed of themselves (Gen. iii. 7). But how? Before their sin were they not naked as well, and had their eyes open? Clearly so, for God did not create them blind; but they did not come to see that they were naked, and did not dwell on the fact, because they were then living in the holy simplicity and purity of original justice, as it were, angels on earth. Now, this holy simplicity and perfection, which they lost by their disobedience, we ought to try and copy by our obedience in this paradise of religion. We should not have our eyes open to see other people's faults; and though another openly displays his fault and nakedness, we should not cast our eyes on it, nor dwell on it, and much more so in things that touch upon obedience. St. John Climacus, speaking of the care and diligence to be observed in this particular, says that, if thoughts and judgments contrary to obedience come into our mind, we should behave as when there come thoughts of blasphemy against God and against the faith, or foul and impure thoughts; we should give them no place nor entry in any way, but rather take from thence an occasion of greater shame and self-abasement.

In a letter of St. Jerome to a monk, instructing him how to behave in religion, one of the things that he strongly enjoins is this: "See that you never come to pass judgment on the commands and ordinances of superiors, asking why they have ordered this or that and whether it would not have been better to have put the thing in some other way than this, for that is no concern of the subject, but of the superior." St. Basil, exhorting to the same, says: "Even

there in the world, when anyone wants to learn a mechanical art in order to gain a livelihood, we see that he apprentices himself to a master, watches steadily his hands, and obeys him in all that he tells him, without contradiction or passing judgment on anything or asking the reason of the order; and in that way he comes out a skilled artisan." We read of Pythagoras that, when he had said a thing, he bade his disciples ask no further questions, but keep to it inviolably, so that on being told, "He said it," there was an end of the matter. How much more is it to be expected that we should do so, dealing with one who is greater than Pythagoras, inasmuch as he stands in place of Christ our Lord; and when we see a thing to be commanded by obedience, no more should be needed to make us at once submit our judgment and believe that to be the proper thing to do.

Eusebius of Caesarea relates that the Lacedemonians had a law that none of the young men who were new to government functions should dare to dispute whether the laws were good or bad, nor look for flaws in them, but they were to surrender their judgments, and regard the laws as coming from God. The fact that their elders and predecessors had given them was to be argument enough for them to convince them that they were quite just. And if there were any difficulty arising from change of circumstances and times, suggesting a change in the laws, it was arranged that this change should not be proposed in presence of the young men, but it was to be referred to the elders in office for them to see what was fit, and no occasion be given to the young to lose their respect and veneration for the laws, which they reckoned would be a great misfortune for the commonwealth. Now, if those Gentile philosophers wished, and thought it so necessary, that such respect should be paid to the laws given by their ancestors, much more reason must there be for us Christians and religious to pay this reverence and respect to the ordinances and commands of our spiritual prelates, founded as they are not only on

natural reason, as were the ordinances of those philosophers, but on the light of faith and the grace of the Gospel.

Our Father, in his marvelous "Letter on Obedience," shows very well that, away from this obedience of the judgment, it is impossible for the obedience of will and execution to be what it should be, and sets down many losses and inconveniences that follow from the want of this obedience; to which letter I refer the reader as the textbook of all that can be said on this matter.

CHAPTER VI

Of Blind Obedience

OUR holy Father Ignatius used to say that, as in the Church Militant God our Lord has opened two roads for men to be able to attain to salvation, the one common, which is the observance of the commandments; the other which adds the evangelical counsels, proper to religious, so in religion itself there are two sorts of obedience, the one imperfect and common, the other perfect and complete, in which is displayed the power of obedience and the perfect virtue of a religious man. Imperfect obedience, he said, has eyes, but to its own hurt; perfect obedience is blind, but in that blindness wisdom lies. The one forms its own judgment on what is commanded; the other does not. The former inclines more to one side than to the other; the latter neither to one side nor the other—it is always level, like the beam of a balance, equally disposed and prepared for all orders to be given. The former obedience obeys with the hand, and resists with the heart, and so deserves not the name of obedience; the latter does what is ordered, and subjects its judgment and will to the will and judgment of the superior, taking for granted all that is ordained by superiors without seeking reasons why it should obey, nor acting on the reasons that occur to that effect, but obeying

rather on this sole consideration that such is obedience. This is blind obedience, so much practised and commended by the saints and masters of spiritual life. It is not called blind in the sense that we are to obey in anything and everything commanded us, sin or no sin, which would be a serious error—and so is expressly declared by our Father in his Constitutions—but it is called blind because in all things in which there is seen no sin we are to obey simply and flatly, without inquiring or seeking reasons for the command, presupposing that what is ordered is holy and according to the divine will, and being satisfied with this reason alone, that such is obedience and so the superior commands.

So Cassian calls this “obedience without discussion and without examination,” because you are not to discuss, or ask questions, or want to know the reason why, but do simply what you are told. St. John Climacus says: “Obedience is action without examination and without discussion, a voluntary death, a life without curiosity, a resignation of one’s own will and discretion, yet not without a high measure of discretion.” St. Basil, commenting on Christ our Redeemer’s commendation to St. Peter, and in him to all superiors, *Feed my sheep*, says that, as sheep obey their shepherd and go the way that he wishes, so the religious must obey his superior and go the way he wishes, with much plainness and simplicity, like a good sheep, without inquiring into or scrutinizing the order. St. Bernard says: “Perfect obedience, especially in a beginner, is void of discernment”—*Perfecta obedientia est, maxime in incipiente, indiscreta*. “Do you know,” he says, “what I call ‘void of discernment’? On your part it should be void of discernment. That is, you should not seek to discern or examine the reason why and wherefore the command is given; shut your eyes, and obey with humility and confidence, without further concern as to why you are ordered to do it. A thing for which our first parents paid heavily was their

seeking to investigate and examine the motive of the command laid upon them. By that avenue the devil entered in and overthrew them; that was the beginning of all their woe and ours. He said to them: *Why hath God bidden you not to eat of all the trees in paradise?* Eve replied: *Lest perchance we die* (Gen. iii. 1, 4). God had said definitely that by eating of that tree they would die. *In whatever day thou shalt eat thereof thou shalt die*; and Eve throws doubt upon it, thinking that God's sentence would prove not to be absolute, but only a threat, thus manifestly laying herself open to be deceived, as indeed she was. The devil said to her: "Go to, you shall not die; but rather, if you eat of this tree, you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil; that is why God has commanded you not to eat of it, that you might not come to know as much as He knows." Eve let herself be carried away with the desire to mount up and be more than she was, so she ate and made Adam eat. They set about inquiring and examining into the reason of that command, and thereby they came to eat and disobey, and be cast out of Paradise. They died on the spot a spiritual death because they sinned mortally, and a bodily death afterwards. And because the devil succeeded so well here, and threw such a good throw, he assails us oftentimes in the same way. And of this the Apostle St. Paul warns us beforehand, saying: *I fear lest the old serpent may deceive you, as he deceived Eve, and make you fall from your holy simplicity* (II Cor. xi. 3). Beware of that serpent; take him not by the head, for he will bite you. Take hold of the thing commanded you by the first grip you can get of it, executing it without inquiry or examination as to the why and wherefore, and in this way obedience will be to you the rule and standard of what you have to do.

Especially at the beginning, says St. Bernard, it is very important to accustom oneself to obey in this manner, blindly and without any questioning; because "it is impossible, morally speaking, for him to stay in religion who

from the outset puts up for being very wide-awake and knowing the reason of everything"—*Novitium prudentem, incipientem sapientem, in cella diu posse consistere, in congregatione durare, impossibile est.* Then what is one to do? How is one to behave? You have to make yourself a fool and a stupid to be wise. *Stultus fiat ut sit sapiens* (I Cor. iii. 18). "This should be all your discernment, in matters of obedience to have no discernment nor judgment; for this discerning and looking at reasons, why and wherefore, is the office of the superior, not of the good subject; his it is to embrace with much simplicity, humility, and confidence whatever the superior ordains. Discretion should be in the superior, execution in the subject"—*Et haec omnis sit eius discretio, ut in hoc nulla sit ei discretio; et haec omnis sapientia eius sit, ut in hac parte nulla ei sit. Discretio superioris est, subditorum est obedire* (St. Bernard).

The glorious Apostle St. Paul makes a good reflection to this effect on the blind obedience of the patriarch Abraham in sacrificing his son Isaac (Rom. iv. 18-22). God had promised him to multiply his generation as the stars of heaven and as the sands on the seashore, and to make him father of many nations (Gen. xv. 4; xvii. 4); and he had only this son Isaac in whom this promise could be accomplished; nor had he any hope of more sons, because he was old and his wife also; and even if he had, it was on this same Isaac that God had made the promise: *In Isaac shall thy seed be called* (Gen. xxi. 12). None the less, God bade him sacrifice this only, this so cherished, son Isaac. He hesitated not over the obedience, and as little did he hesitate in his faith of the fulfilment of the promise that God had made him; but in blind obedience he started to put God's command in execution, and had already lifted up his knife to cut Isaac's throat. *Against natural hope he kept his hope that he could be father of many nations* (Rom. iv. 18). Supernatural hope overcame natural distrust, arising from what his eyes saw; he saw that by sacrificing him he

was left without a son, and, nevertheless, he doubted not of the promise of God, but remained in full assurance that it must be accomplished either by raising his son from the dead afterwards, or in some other way that he did not understand or know. This obedience pleased God so much that He made on the spot the promise that Christ should be born of him, and in that way his generation should be multiplied as the stars of heaven. "By Myself have I sworn that because thou hast done this deed, and for love of Me hast not spared thine only son, I will bless thee and multiply thy posterity as the stars of heaven and as the sands that are on the seashore; thy posterity shall hold the gates of their enemies, and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed My voice" (Gen. xxii. 16-18). St. Jerome says: "See how pleasing to God was Abraham's blind obedience, since He gives it such a reward and recompense. For one son that he was ready to sacrifice to God, God bade him count the stars of heaven; and so He said that He would multiply his posterity"—*Cum unico filio non parcit in terris, stellas pro filiis enumerare iubetur in coelis*. Hence those ancient Fathers came to set so much value on blind obedience, and so much to practise it and exercise others in it. We have books full of instances of this, many of them confirmed by miracles, to give us to understand how pleasing to God this manner of obedience is.

Our Father, following this common doctrine of the saints, illustrates it by two very proper and profitable comparisons. "Let everyone," he says, "of those who live under obedience make up his mind that he is to let himself be carried and ruled by Divine Providence through his superior as though he were a dead body, which lets itself be carried where you will and treated as you like." St. Francis used to use this comparison, and repeated it many times. *We are dead to the world and to the things of the world* (Col. iii. 3). Being a religious means being dead to the

world; and, therefore, they call entry into religion "a civil death," since we are thereby made as dead men. The mark of a man's being dead is his not seeing, not answering, not feeling, not complaining; we, then, have no eyes to see, no opinion to pass upon what belongs to the superior; we have no "answering back," no replies to make upon what obedience enjoins; we do not complain, we do not resent our being given orders that are not to our taste. For the dead body, the worst that the house affords is sought out and brought, the oldest linen to clothe and lay it out; so the religious should seek the oldest and most cast-away clothing. Let each one persuade himself that the worst things in the house will be given him in point of dress, food and lodging, and everything else; and if he does not accept this, but resents it, he is not dead nor mortified.

Our Father further says that we should let ourselves be carried and guided by Divine Providence by means of the superior like the staff or stick of an old man, that serves him who holds it in his hand wherever and for whatsoever purpose he wills to make use of it. As the stick goes where it is taken, and settles down where they put it, and has no movement of its own, but only that which the user of it gives it, so the religious should have no "proper motion" of his own, but let himself be guided and governed by his superior. Where they carry him, there he should go; where they set him down, there he should halt, now in the mud, now on the dry ground, now on high, now in a lowly place, without any resistance or contradiction whatever. If the stick that should be to you an aid and comfort in walking should resist you, and refuse to set itself down where you wanted to put it, but chose some other situation, it would be a nuisance and an obstacle instead of an aid, and you would fling it away. In like manner, when the superior wishes to make use of you and put you in such a place, in such an office and occupation, if you resist the superior's hand and set up a movement contrary to his in deed, will, or judg-

ment, then instead of helping you will be in the way. You will be a burden and afford your superiors matter of reflection; they will want to get rid of you, and throw you over and discharge you somewhere else; and so they will go playing battledore and shuttlecock with you, from house to house, because you are not a good staff, and they cannot make use and avail themselves of you as they wish. A staff used for sport and recreation is a thing that the owner can take in hand, do with it what he likes, and play with it as he wills. Such should be the religious. It should be a pleasure to take you in hand and command you, and for the superior to do with you what he likes and glory with the centurion: *I have under me soldiers; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to that other, Come, and he cometh; and to another, Do this, and he doth it* (Matt. viii. 9).

St. Basil brings another good comparison to this purpose. As a workman employed on a building or any other construction uses his tools at his will, nor ever was there tool that did not readily obey him, to serve him as he wished, so the religious must aim at being a useful instrument in his order, that the superior may make use of him as he thinks fit for the spiritual building, without his offering any sort of resistance to the use they wish to put him to. Further, as the tool does not choose the work for which it is to serve and be useful, so neither must the religious choose, but leave all to the will and judgment of the workman, that is, his superior. Further still, to go on with the comparison, as the tool does not stir in the absence of the workman, nor has any proper motion of its own, but only that which he communicates to it, so the religious must not take in hand nor do any business but by the judgment and order of his superior. Not even in the least things must the religious be his own master, not for an instant—*ne ad punctum quidem temporis*; but always and in all things he must be moved and guided by the superior. This is the

form and style of obedience that we have to keep to in religion.

I remember what a very grave father [Anthony Araoz] used to say—and he had been a long time superior in the Society—that he had spent fifteen years in it, and had never found it necessary to give a reason for any order of obedience. He thought it an insult to the subject to give a reason for anything commanded him. They all lived in such simplicity and abandonment of self that no one set himself to argue about the things that the superior ordered; but as soon as they knew this, “It is an order of obedience,” they submitted their judgment and concluded at once: “It is good, it is the better course; he will know the reason why.” We should try to carry out this principle; and the senior men amongst us should be foremost and conspicuous in doing so, and not think that they have more license than others to criticize and examine the obediences given and the things ordained by superiors. We read of our blessed Father Ignatius that, when he was General of the Society, he said time after time that, if the pope ordered him to start from the port of Ostia, which is near Rome, going on board the first vessel he found, though it were without mast, without rudder, without sail, without oars, and without other things necessary for navigation or sustenance, and to traverse the sea, he would do so and obey, not only in peace, but in contentment and joy of heart. And when a nobleman, hearing this, wondered and said: “And what prudence would there be in that?” he replied: “Prudence, sir, must not be asked so much of him who obeys and executes as of him who commands and ordains.”

CHAPTER VII

Of the Obedience Necessary in Spiritual Things

IT is not only in things that seem to fall in well with flesh and blood that we must subject and surrender our judgment and reason; the same is equally necessary in things contrary to flesh and blood, and in themselves quite spiritual and holy. Let no one imagine that in these matters he is licensed to depart from the will and judgment of the superior. Rather it is just here that obedience of the judgment is more necessary, since from the exalted nature of the spiritual world the danger of a fall will be greater if we have no guide. So true is this that Cassian goes so far as to say that by no other vice does the devil drag away a monk and cast him headlong to perdition so readily as when he persuades him to despise the counsels of his elders, and trust to his own judgment, decision, and knowledge. Cassian, and St. John Climacus also, quotes many instances of monks, men of high spirituality and much given to prayer, and of a ripe old age, who, by trusting their own judgment and letting themselves be guided by that, came to be grievously deceived by the devil. The devil led one to the point of wanting to sacrifice his son, who was along with him in the monastery, under the idea that he should thereby be another Abraham. And he would have carried it into effect, too, had not the lad, seeing him sharpening his knife and preparing the cords to bind him, suspected what was in the wind and taken to his heels. Another he came to induce to throw himself down a precipice, persuading him that he would be a martyr and go straight to heaven.

Of the monk Heron, Cassian relates that he was so recollected and abstemious that even on the solemn day of Easter, when the other monks used to meet in the church, and afterwards take recreation together and have some-

thing extra to eat, he would not go out of his cell, nor break his abstinence so much as by the addition of a few herbs, but kept to his ordinary diet of bread and water, and that in very restricted measure. Hereby there was engendered in him a pride and assurance in his own judgment so great that the devil succeeded in persuading him that so holy a man as he could not incur any danger in this life, and might with perfect safety throw himself into a well, and be no worse for it, since the angels would receive him in their arms so that he should take no harm. Accordingly one night he did throw himself into a very deep well by way of proving his great virtue and merits; the result was that he hurt himself badly, and died of it two days after. On hearing the noise, the monks rushed to the spot and with great labor drew him out half-dead; and when he saw with his own eyes the hurt that he had received, and all the monks were trying to persuade him to repent, still no means could be found to get him to believe that he had been under an illusion, and so he made a miserable end. Hence we may learn the great danger there is in a man's trusting his own judgment and not yielding and subjecting it to the proper authority, whatever be his age in religion and proficiency in spirituality. Hence a saint went so far as to say, and very rightly, too, that he who trusts himself has no need of a devil to tempt him, seeing that he is his own devil. St. Chrysostom says that he who relies on his own judgment, however spiritual he may be, is in greater danger of going wrong than a mere beginner who lets himself be guided and governed by another; and likens the former to a great pilot, who, in reliance on his own skill, goes out onto the high seas in a boat without oars or sails; while the latter, being no seaman, trusts himself to an experienced mariner to make his passage in a well-appointed ship.

Let no one, then, be under the illusion that in spiritual things, as in fasts, prayers, penances, and mortifications, he may depart from obedience and guide himself by his own

judgment. Cassian observes very well that it is one and the same kind of disobedience to break the superior's command in view of getting more work done as it would be to do the same to get more rest. And St. Basil says: "Go always on this principle, never to do a thing against the sentiment and will of your superior, since you are not your own, but belong to your order, and to act otherwise would be a theft and even a sacrilege, since it is taking away a thing that is already dedicated and offered to God." And he gives a good reason: "If the thing that you are doing is good and proper for you to do, why do you try to do it on the sly and without leave?"—*Hoc apud te constanter teneto, ut nihil omnino quidquam praeter illius sententiam facias; quidquid enim eo insciente facis, id furtum et sacrilegium est, tibi que exitium non autem utilitatem ullam apportat, esto tu id bonum iudices. Nam si bonum est, quia ita clam fit et non in aperto?* Your superior is as desirous of your good and your improvement as you are; tell him the thing, and he will give you leave for it; if you do not do it in that way, not only will it profit you nothing, but you will be the worse for doing it. Let not that saying of Isaias apply to you: *Offer me no more sacrifice to no purpose* (i. 13). Why should you be anxious to labor in vain?

St. Gregory and St. Bernard say very well: A bad thing ought never to be ordered, and in a thing that is sinful it is clear that the subject ought not to obey; but when it comes to omitting a thing that is good because the superior forbids it, that ought to be done. The tree of Paradise that God forbade to our first parents was not bad, but good; but God forbade it them to increase their merit by that obedience, and show the subjection and acknowledgment that they owed to their Creator and Lord. So He commanded them not to eat of a thing that they might lawfully and holily have eaten if He had not forbidden it. So also our superiors at times forbid things which of themselves are good, because there and then they are not suitable to the

subject, or to try his virtue and obedience. St. Basil adds here a thing specially worthy of remark; he says that true and perfect obedience in a subject is not so much seen in his leaving undone what is evil as in his leaving undone what in itself is good and holy, when ordered to leave it undone. And the reason thereof is that evil, though not forbidden, ought to be left undone because it is evil; but what is of itself good and holy is only left undone because of the command to let it alone; so the virtue of obedience shines out more conspicuously here, because but for that motive there would be no apparent reason for leaving the thing. Contrariwise again, when a man refuses to yield and submit in spiritual things, things of themselves good and holy, he shows more self-will and hardness of judgment; because in other things there is a certain pleasure and prompting of sensuality, making one fail in silence, modesty, temperance, and in other like things commanded; but in these things, that are contrary to our flesh and sensuality, there is no other pleasure than that of doing one's own will and following one's own judgment: it is all mere disobedience and hard-headedness. And so it comes to be that, just where a man thinks to please God more and do a work of supererogation and perfection, in that very work he rather shows his imperfection and makes himself more displeasing to God and superiors. God keep you from taking after the hard-mouthed horse, that neither feels nor obeys the bit, but goes where he likes, and when you least think it will throw you into a tight corner or over a precipice. A good horse should be soft-mouthed, taking the bit well and letting itself be carried along and governed; so the religious should be soft and yielding in his judgment, taking kindly to the bridle of obedience and letting himself be governed and carried readily in one direction and another.

In the Ecclesiastical History we have the story of that great servant of God, Simon Stylites, which means "Seated

on a Pillar." He kept his position and was there doing penance on a pillar forty cubits [sixty feet] high, in winter suffering the severest cold, and the most intense heat in summer. So great was the penance and abstinence that he did there that some came to doubt whether he were a man at all; for it seemed a thing beyond all human endurance to be able to do and suffer the things that he did and suffered, especially when they saw that every year he fasted all Lent without eating or drinking anything all that time. Now, some holy Fathers of the Desert, seeing this strange and extraordinary way of life, assembled and held a meeting on the case, to see what was to be done; and the resolution they came to was to send him a message in this form: "What new and quite unprecedented manner of living is this? What means it that you have left the beaten track, trodden by the saints, and taken a road strange and new, that no one has gone before? The Fathers have assembled in congregation, and bid you come down from there at once, and follow the common way, trodden of old, which other monks follow, and give over those novelties." The messenger was instructed that, if on hearing this message he obeyed, and with promptitude and alacrity at once set about coming down from his pillar, they gave him leave to stay there and persevere in that manner of life, as new as it was rigorous, since his obedience was sufficient witness to that way's being of God; but if he resisted and would not come down and obey, the instructions were to force him to come down and leave the place at once. The messenger went with this message to the saint, and scarcely had he heard the mandate published that was brought him from the Fathers, when he put a foot forward to come down and obey. Then the messenger gave him the second part of the message that he brought, and said to him: "Be of good heart, my father, and persevere with every blessing upon you in that manner of life that you have taken up, since it is of God, and such is the opinion of those Fathers." A

thing to be well noted here is, on the one hand, the saint's great obedience and submission of judgment in a thing so good, that he took to be of God; and on the other, how great account all those Fathers made of that obedience and submission, since they took it for a sufficient sign for judging that the Spirit of God was there; whereas his refusal to submit and subject himself at once to obedience they would have reckoned enough to hold him for no good man.

This is an excellent sign, and one commonly accepted as such by confessors and masters of spirit in many things, to know whether suggestions come from the good Spirit or not. This penitent has a great devotion to frequent Communion, and the confessor [prior to A.D. 1905] bids him not to communicate so often. This other desires to do great penance, many fasts, disciplines, and haircloths; another would fain sleep on the ground; another would curtail his sleep, and so forth. A very good thing, certainly, and very praiseworthy, is the desire of much penance and mortification; and of the two extremes that which is to be less suspected is an inclination to go rather against oneself than in favor of oneself, since the natural desire of self-love is ever to be feared and held in suspicion. But the best course in all these things, and one beyond all suspicion, is to give an account to the superior or the confessor of all that you do and all that you desire to do, and take the line that he marks out, since that will be the more pleasing to God and the more meritorious way.

And let this theological teaching be observed, for it is quite good and quite certain that, if a man has a working desire of doing certain penances or mortifications, and on giving an account of it to the superior the latter orders him to leave such things off, and he obeys in the matter, not only does he not lose the merit and gain of such works, but rather increases and doubles it; since on the one hand he gains the value and merit of those works and penances,

for the working will that he had of doing them; and on the other hand he gains the value and merit of obedience by leaving them off for obedience. And sometimes this merit will be greater than the former for the greater abnegation and resignation of his will and judgment, in leaving what he so much desired, to obey and do the will of God as declared by his superior. This theological teaching was taught from heaven to the blessed St. Bridget. This saint had a strong inclination to severe penances; but the spiritual father who had the guidance of her took off at one time part of them in consideration for her health. She, though she obeyed, found it difficult, and was afraid of losing in her soul some degree of virtue. The most holy Virgin appeared to her and said to her: "Look here, daughter; if two men desire to keep a fasting day for devotion, and the one, who is his own master, actually does fast and receives his pay for fasting, while the other, being under obedience, does not fast because the superior tells him not, the latter gets double pay, one installment for his earnest and sincere desire to fast, and the other for renouncing his own will and obeying."

Even there in their heathendom, the heathen philosophers recognized and greatly esteemed this manner of obedience. Plutarch tells of Agesilaus, a most famous captain of the Lacedemonians, that, when he was deeply engaged in wars against the enemies of his country, and things were going very prosperously with him, and he was gaining great victories and winning great fights, there came to him one day a dispatch from the home government, bidding him retreat. And though he was in the midst of his glories, and had quite the upper hand of the enemy, he gave up at once and retreated. Plutarch says that he gained more honor and reputation by this act than by anything he had done in all the rest of his life. But let us leave foreign examples, since we have our own. Who will not be astonished at that great obedience of Father Francis Xavier, whom our blessed

Father Ignatius had so much reason to think highly of. He had in hand the conquest and conversion of a new world, when our Father summoned him to Rome, doing it with one single letter of the alphabet which he put at the end of his dispatch, added to his signature; it was *I*, which in Spanish stands for *Id* (Go). He was quite satisfied that he would quit that great enterprise and take the road to Rome from what was almost the extremity of the East. And doubtless he would have done so, but for the event that before the letter reached him he was already gone to enjoy the fruits of his labors in heaven.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IT is told of the Abbot Nesteron that, the day he entered religion, he reckoned within himself: "I and the ass of the monastery are all one." From today onwards you have to be like the ass. All that they put on its back, it carries without saying a word of the why and wherefore. Be it much or little, it never in any way resists, nor has any opinion to the contrary. They give it blows; it shows no sense of wrong, nor ceases to work. A lowly animal he is, and a despised; on all hands he is held to be of no account, and with a little straw they reckon his services paid. The poor beast does not go where he likes, nor rest when he likes, nor do what he likes. In all and for all he obeys the man in charge; so also should the religious do. And as the animal does not eat for himself, nor rest for himself, but all is done for the better service of his master, so also the religious must not eat for himself, nor sleep, nor enjoy himself, nor take recreation on his own account, but all that is done to be better able to serve God and his order. *Make me, O Lord, as a beast of burden before Thee, that I may*

be ever with Thee (Psalm lxxii. 23). So, then, make yourself as a beast of burden in religion, and in that way you will advance greatly therein.

Simon Metaphrastes relates, and Surius quotes it in the Life of St. Melania of Rome, an example which, he says, she used to repeat to her nuns. There came a youth to one of the great monks of old, saying that he wished to be his disciple. The old man, wishing to show what he should be if he wished to be a religious and a disciple of his, told him to flog a statue that was in the grounds, and give it blows and kicks. The youth did so. That done, the old man asked him if the statue had made any complaint or resistance. The youth said not. "Go back again, then," he said, "and beat it as before; and besides, give it much injurious language and insults." The youth having done this a second and a third time, the old man asked him again if the statue had resented it and shown itself offended. He answered No, because, after all, it was a statue without sense or speech. Then the old man said to him: "Now, if you can let me do to you as you have done to this statue, without resisting or contradicting or complaining, by all means come in to be my disciple; but if not, return home, since you are not made for a religious."

We read of St. Gertrude that she had an abbess of great holiness, but very unpleasant in her manner and apt to give sharp answers. The saint prayed to God to deliver her from this bad temper. The Lord answered: "Why would you have her freed from it, since thereby she takes occasion to keep herself in humility, that seeing that she falls into some impatience, she may humble herself and recognize her weakness? And, besides, what merit would you have in obeying if she were sweet-tempered? So I leave her this fault for your exercise, and that you may learn to obey."

Blosius relates something like this of the same saint, that one day, as she was praying for a defect of a certain per-

son who was superior of a congregation, the Lord appeared to her and said to her: "I, for the abundance of My loving-kindness, gentleness, and divine love wherewith I have cherished this congregation, permit the existence of some defects even in those who govern it, that in that way the merit of the congregation may be increased; for there is much more virtue in subjecting oneself to another whose faults are known than to one whose actions seem perfect. I permit superiors to have some defects, and sometimes to forget themselves for the numerous occupations and variety of cares that they have, that they may humble themselves more. The merit of subjects grows and is augmented as well by the defects as by the virtues of those who govern them; and on the same principle the merit of those who govern and direct them grows, as is reasonable, as well by the progress and virtues as by the defects of their subjects." By these words of the Lord, St. Gertrude understood the exuberant loving-kindness of the Divine Wisdom, which so secretly arranges the salvation and cure of His servants, permitting faults in them to make them more perfect.

In the life of St. Anthony, St. Athanasius writes of those monks of old who gave themselves over to obedience, that they sought out severe and ill-tempered superiors who would never thank them for anything they did, but scold them, as Pacomius did his disciple Theodore to purify him if there were any dust of vainglory about him. And the harder and more peevish the superior was, the more obedient were they. One of the modes of religious life which those holy Fathers practised of old was for two disciples to be under the discipline and correction of one old Father, whom they served in all things as a slave serves his master. And as a master takes occasion at every step to scold and chastise his slave for not doing things to his liking, so also did those masters behave on the like occasion. And sometimes, through peevishness of temper, sometimes to

exercise the young in virtue, they dealt out rough treatment to their disciples for as many as thirty years, as St. John Climacus says, proving them with various kinds of hard labor and harsh language.

Cassian tells of a wealthy lady of rank that lived in the city of Alexandria a very pious life. She had such a taste for suffering that, not content with bearing generously the pains and troubles of ordinary occurrence, she went out of her way to seek and provide for herself new occasions of trial, for her better exercise in virtue and mortification. With this desire she called upon the holy bishop Athanasius, and begged him to give her a widow, one of those supported by the Church, to keep and make comfortable in her house. The holy bishop praised her good desire, and bade them give her one, the best servant of God, and the kindest and most peaceful-tempered that they had. She took her to her house, waited on her, and made her very comfortable. But when she saw the gentleness and gracious manners of this woman, who was full of thankfulness and praises for the services and kindnesses rendered her, she went back to the bishop with loud complaints that, whereas she had asked for a woman to serve for her own exercise and spiritual advancement, they had not given her one. The saint, not quite understanding what she wanted, thought that by oversight they had not given her any woman at all. He inquired into the matter, and found that they had given her the best of the lot; whereupon he understood the end and motive of her petitioning, and answered that he would see to it. So he bade them give her the most ill-natured and least virtuous of all they had—which character, the story says, was easier to find than the good one. Their choice fell on a woman, dour, ungracious, thankless, moody, passionate, wordy, and quarrelsome. She took her home, and began to serve her with great charity and humility as she had done the former, and even more. All that she got for this by way of return and gratitude was com-

plaints, insults, curses, utter scorn; the woman declaring that she had brought her there not to entertain her, but to torment her; nay, sometimes she got so angry as not to keep her hands off her. The holy woman bore this in silence and endured it all, doubling and redoubling her attentions and efforts to make her comfortable. The more insults she received, the more services and kindnesses she rendered; and by these exercises she experienced great aid and profit to her soul. She went to thank the bishop for having gratified her desire by giving her such a teacher of patience, by whose teaching she profited continually. Occupied in these and other holy exercises she died in the Lord.

The Abbot Poemen used to relate what befell him when he was a novice in his dealings with the Abbot Joseph. Abbot Joseph had in his monastery a very fine fig tree, and used to send Poemen every morning to eat the fruit—an extraordinary thing to do, considering the abstinence the monks professed. One day that he gave him the order it was Friday, and he had not the heart to eat then, not to break the fast of that day, so universally received among all monks. Afterwards he was seized with remorse of conscience for not having obeyed, and went to tell the abbot. “Forgive me, father, the question I am about to ask: What is the reason why, professing such abstinence as we do, you have bidden me every day to eat those figs, especially on a day like this? I must tell you that I was much upset today, and so could not bring myself to eat; at the same time I am full of shame and remorse for not having obeyed you in this matter, seeing that you would never have ordered me such a thing without cause.” To this the old man answered: “Son, the Fathers of the Desert of old did not in the beginning order their monks things so very rational and obvious, but things that on the face of them sometimes seemed absurd and mad, to test them and try whether they had submission of judgment and true resignation to the will of the superior; and when they saw that they did them

without reply or hesitation, thenceforth they only ordered them things necessary and suitable."

In the Lives of the holy Fathers it is related that one of them saw one day four orders of the just in heaven. The first was of invalids, who in their weak health had practised patience and given thanks to God. The second, superior to the former, was of those who welcomed and gave hospitality to poor pilgrims, and served the sick, and, in short, practised works of charity. The third was of those who had left all things, and lived in the desert in great poverty and abstinence, occupied in prayer. The fourth order, superior to all the rest, was of those who, for love of Jesus Christ, lived in obedience, subject to the will of another in all things; and these he saw wearing chains and collars of gold, and in greater glory than the others. Surprised at this, he asked how it was that these had more glory than the rest, including the solitaries. It was answered him that it was because the monks in their solitude, and the others who were occupied in works of charity, fulfilled their own will in what they did, but the obedient not so; they sacrificed their own will to God, and as the will was the most valuable thing in man, so the sacrifice of it was of such merit in the sight of God; and the honor given them of those collars of gold was because they bowed their necks under the yoke of obedience.

This well agrees with what is related of the Abbot Pambo, that there came to visit him four monks of the Desert, all men of signal virtues. The first distinguished himself chiefly in fasts and great austerities that he practised; the second, in poverty; the third, in charity to his neighbor; the fourth had lived twenty years under obedience. The holy abbot preferred this last to all the other three, because such virtue as they had, they had kept of their own will; but this last one, entirely abandoning his will, had made himself the servant of another's. And saying this he added that those who did so, and persevered to the end in doing so, might truly be called martyrs.

CHAPTER IX

*Of the Source and Origin of Judgments Contrary to
Obedience, and the Means Whereby We May Help
Ourselves against Them*

THE root whence judgments and reasonings against the orders of obedience spring is our want of mortification. But someone will say: "That is as though we asked the origin of pride, and got the answer that it comes of want of humility." It is quite clear that, if my judgment were mortified, my obedience would be simple and I should have no judgments against it. But that is not what I say; what I say is, that from our not keeping our passions and appetites mortified, from our being great lovers of our own ease and the accomplishment of our own will, from our not being indifferent and resigned to all that may be commanded us—from thence it is that many reasons and judgments arise in our minds when anything is commanded us against our will and appetite. If you do not believe me, let anyone enter into himself, and see whence it is that judgments and answers back against obedience are wont commonly to present themselves, and he will find that it is when something is commanded to which he has a repugnance. When something is not granted which you want, when you are disappointed and touched to the quick on a sore point, then it is that apparent reasons against what is ordered come up in shoals; but when the order is something to your taste, something that you smack your lips over, then no judgments or reasons to the contrary present themselves; rather you think that what comes is just the thing, and is the most reasonable order in the world.

St. Jerome, on those words of the Prophet Osee (vii. 11): *Ephraim is as a misguided dove, that hath no heart*, asks why Ephraim is not compared to other birds, but to the dove. And he answers: Other birds do their best to defend

their offspring, even at the risk of their lives; and when they see a kite or a hawk, a raven or a snake, approach their nest, they fly up and down, defending their young as best they can; and when they can do no more, they show the grief they feel by their plaintive laments. But the dove does not defend her offspring, nor utter any plaintive cries, nor show any feeling, when they are taken away, nor go after them to look for them; therefore Ephraim is compared to a dove. And for this Christ our Redeemer tells us to imitate the dove, so that, when they take away our little ones that we love and are fond of, we should be as the dove, offering no resistance or contradiction, nor complaining, nor showing any resentment thereat (Matt. x. 16). Therefore it is from our want of mortification, and the difficulty and repugnance that we feel over things contrary to our will, that these judgments arise. So the principal means that we can take on our part against this temptation is to be sure and mortify ourselves, and not have any will of our own, nor any desire of our own liking and convenience, but to be quite indifferent and resigned to all that the superior shall chose to make of us, and not care whether they order us this rather than that.

Therefore those ancient Fathers, as good masters of spirit, exercised their disciples greatly, commanding them things that seemed not to the purpose, to try their obedience and curb their will and judgment. And this purposeless procedure was much to the purpose; for it is much more important that you should mortify yourself, and that your will and judgment be curbed by being bent the other way about, than any advantage that could be gained by doing the thing in another fashion. Oftentimes the superior's mind is that this or the other advantage be forfeited for your gain and advancement; and so it is not loss but gain. And as those who break in wild colts make them sometimes gallop, now go slow, now right about, now in the midst of an evolution to wheel round the other way,

now to stop suddenly in mid career, that they may get accustomed to obey the bit, and not follow their own impetuous motions, so good masters of spirit act. So we read that the great Anthony dealt with his disciple Paul; he would make him sew a garment and immediately go back and unsew it, and weave a basket and immediately unweave what he had woven. Others made their disciples draw water from a well, and empty it back at once into the same well. We read of the blessed St. Francis that he made his companion Friar Maseo spin round so many times in the middle of the road that he grew giddy and fell fainting to the ground. Others who sought entrance into his order he made plant lettuces or cabbages wrong way up, root upwards, to try their obedience and uproot from them all self-opinion, and not leave in them any token of private judgment or self-will. Would to God that this exercise were more in practise to this day; because if one gets accustomed to have what is well done undone, he will not feel it when they rebuke him for what is badly done.

But since this entire mortification and resignation requires great perfection, in the meantime, while we do not attain to it, we may aid ourselves by our very want of mortification, recognizing and putting all down to that. This will be a very good means to prevent the judgments and reasonings that occur against obedience from doing us any harm; for once you understand that it is the fault of your imperfection, you will make no account of it. A sick person who knows that he is ill, is quite aware that, though he feels thirsty, it is not proper for him to drink, and though the purgative draught is bitter, and the leech hurts him, that is just the thing for him; therefore he does not believe his appetite nor put any trust in it, but subjects himself to the doctor, following his prescription and taking that for the better thing. Thus we are sick, full of self-love and disorderly passions; like a sick man, we have no appetite but for what does us harm, and what is good and

profitable shocks and disgusts us. Let us, then, use the expedient which the sick man uses who wishes to get better; let us have no belief in ourselves, but believe the superior, who has the care and direction of us, and take for certain what he commands and ordains, making no account of the judgments that occur to us, but holding them for a sick man's fancies. In this way not only will the judgments and reasonings that occur to you against obedience do you no harm, but you will gather fruit from them, and conform yourself more to obedience, because you will at once return upon yourself, saying: "As I am sick, what is good and to my advantage offends me; and I need no other sign to understand that this is what befits me and is the better thing than the fact of its offending me and difficulties' occurring against it, because I am sick and my taste is all awry."

This is a great remedy against all judgments that occur, not only against obedience, but also against our brethren, to turn them at once against yourself. "I am the blind man who goes astray, so that what is well done seems to me evil; what judgment have I got that I should seek to lay down the law for others?" And when the manners of your brother offend you, and his way of going on, you should throw the blame upon yourself. "I am the ill-mannered man, and therefore this and that offends me; the fault is in me, and not in the other man."

Against all temptations it is a great remedy to understand that it is a temptation; therefore, when the devil tempts us, he labors all he can that his temptation may not appear a temptation, but right reason, so that we may fall into it. As the hunter, when he sets a trap, always tries to make it appear not a trap, but a good offer of food, since nor beast nor bird would fall into it if they took it for a trap, so the devil acts. *Satan transforms himself into an angel of light* (II Cor. xi. 14), that we may take that to be light and brightness which is gloom and darkness. God deliver

you from the temptation that appears not a temptation, but a reasonable course of action. When judgments of your own making get such a mastery over you as to impress you with the belief that you are not influenced by passion, nor under temptation, and that you do not speak from any personal motive, but because the case is clear and any man of sense will see it, then your temptation is great, and the remedy hard to apply. These temptations that come under the appearance of good are the gravest and most dangerous of temptations. When a barefaced temptation comes, you may help yourself by many means to overcome it; but when it is not known for a temptation, but is taken rather for a reasonable proposal, how shall we manage to throw it off? When it is not known for an enemy, but taken for a friend, how are we to guard against it? A great servant of God used to say that he was not afraid of the defects that he knew, but of those that he did not know, or made no account of, or excused.

But to come back to the point, I say that, when reasonings and judgments occur against obedience, it will be a great remedy to turn against ourselves and make up our minds that this is a weakness and want of mortification and a shortcoming of ours, and so take no notice of them. We have abundant reason for doing this, because it is the nature of our flesh and sensuality at once to invent and find many apparent reasons for what pleases and satisfies us, and many inconveniences attending on the contrary. We are so blinded by our self-love and passions as easily to believe and judge a thing to be quite the contrary of what it really is. Thus to a very thirsty man water seems to be the best and pleasantest and most delicious thing in the world, because he judges according to his present disposition. So to anyone laboring under any violent emotion, the disorderly affection that he has represents the object as something very different from what it really is, and makes him judge of it contrary to the truth. When a man knows

himself not to be clear of earthly affections, and to have many lively passions, he should not easily trust his own judgment, but rather look upon it as a disorder and an enemy to be on his guard against.

Not content with not letting ourselves be carried away by these judgments, we should further endeavor to make our profit out of the temptation to our greater confusion and humiliation, saying: "What? Can I be so proud as to harbor judgments against my superior? Did I not enter religion to be at everybody's service? And shall I seek now to prefer myself to him who is my head, and superior of us all? I did not come to command, nor to rule and govern, but to obey and be commanded; I have no business to judge my guide, but he should judge me." This is a general remedy, very useful for gathering fruit from all temptations. From that very pride and vanity which assails us we should take occasion to humble ourselves the more. As the devil tries to convert the antidote into poison, getting us to take pride in our virtue and in the very act of humility that we do, so it should be ours to convert the poison into an antidote by humbling ourselves the more for the pride that comes over us. To think that pride should come over me, such a weak and imperfect creature as I am! To think that I should be vain of what I do badly, and wish to be regarded and esteemed on that account! There it clearly appears what I am. It is a wondrous countermining to the artifices of the devil, to contrive to make gain out of what he intended for our ruin. *Salvation from our enemies* (Luke i. 71).

There are many other considerations to aid us not to give credit to our own reasonings, nor take account of our own judgments, but always hold them in suspicion. The first is, because the wise commonly say that in all things it is true prudence not to trust one's own prudence; how much more will this hold good in our own affairs, where we are an interested party. It is clear, and it is a first princi-

ple in moral philosophy, that no one is a good judge in his own cause, because passion and self-love blind us. Thus we have no reason to trust our own judgment, but rather to follow the judgment of our superior, and persuade ourselves that whatsoever he decides is the best course.

A second consideration to aid us to this effect is that the subject sees sundry particular reasons that occur, while the superior sees them and many others, which the subject does not know nor can know. And though in view only of those particular reasons the course that suggests itself to you might possibly be the better, yet in view of all the reasons together, which the superior knows, it is not the better. And thus not only in the way of religious life and perfection, but also according to the law of prudence, it is a great piece of impertinence and pride to set oneself to judge and pass sentence on the order of the superior for one or two reasons which occur to you, reasons which the superior has examined repeatedly, while he has others which make it appropriate to do something else. St. Augustine draws a good comparison from the head, the upper part of man. The soul, he says, animates and gives life to our whole body, but in the head all the five senses stand out, sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In the other members there is only the sense of touch; and for that reason all the members are subject to the head, which is above them all as a higher power to guide and govern them. So in the superior, as in the head, all the five senses have their marked place, but in you, as a member, only one. You touch only one particular reason, while the superior touches them all; he hears, sees, and knows all that there is in each case; thus it is reasonable that the members be subject to the head. Even in the world they say that the fool knows more in his own house than the wise man in the house of a stranger; how much more will the wise man know more in his own house than the other in the house of a stranger! The Wise Man says: *Judge not against the judge, because*

he judgeth according to what is just (Ecclus. viii. 17). See what an impertinence it is to seek to be judge of what you do not know what way it comes, nor whither it goes, nor can know, nor is it well that you should know.

A third consideration that will aid us to give up our own judgment and submit to that of the superior, is to reflect that the superior looks to the common good of the whole house and the whole order, while you, as an individual, look just in the direction of your own finger, and give ear to your own particular conveniences. Now the common and universal good is to be preferred to the particular. We see even that natural things cease to act according to their particular inclinations when it is for the common and universal good, as the water ceases to run down in the syphon, and at other times mounts up, that there may be no vacuum, for the perfection of the universe, as the philosophers say—*propter perfectionem universi*. Thus each individual must abate somewhat of his own convenience and inclination for the accomplishment of the common good, which is what the superior regards.

A fourth consideration that will also help us not to give credit to our own judgments is the experience that we have of ourselves. How many things have we believed, and taken to be right well assured, and affirmed them as certainties, and then we have found that we have been mistaken, and have changed our opinion and been ashamed afterwards of having believed as we did believe and judged as we did judge! If a man had deceived you twice or thrice, you would never trust him again; how, then, is it that you trust your own judgment, having been deceived by it so many times? This experience, which everyone has of his own ignorance and of his having been mistaken on other occasions, is commonly the reason why in things on which the youngest easily make up their minds, the oldest proceed with great reserve and consideration, as being men of ripe judgment, prudent and experienced.

CHAPTER X

An Explanation of the Three Reasons That the Apostle St. Paul Gives for Obedience

OBEY your superiors and be subject to them, for they watch with care as having to give an account to God for your souls, that they may do this with joy, and not with sighs, for this is not expedient for you either (Heb. xiii. 17). The Apostle St. Paul here gives us three reasons for obeying our superiors, which, being reasons of the Holy Ghost, spoken by the mouth of the Apostle, cannot fail to be very good and profitable. The first is: Obey your superiors and do all that they bid you, always understanding that there be no sin in the command, as has been explained, and upon this supposition we proceed always in all that we shall say. Be subject to them because they watch as having to give an account to God for your souls. One of the greatest comforts and consolations that we have in religion is this, that we are safe in doing what obedience commands. The superior it is that may be wrong in commanding this or that, but you are certain that you are not wrong in doing what is commanded, for the only account that God will ask of you is if you have done what they commanded you, and with that your account will be sufficiently discharged before God. It is not for you to render account whether the thing commanded was a good thing or whether something else would have been better; that does not belong to you, nor will God lay it to your account, but to the account of the superior. When you act under obedience God takes it off your books, and puts it on the books of the superior. So says St. Jerome: "What a grand liberty and security is that of obedience, under which we can scarcely sin"—*O summa libertas, qua obtenta vix possit homo peccare!* Obedience, as he says, renders us in some sort impeccable.

Especially for those who like ourselves are occupied in ministering to our neighbor, it is a great comfort to be satisfied that one is doing the will of God. If we were there in the world, however good we might be and however desirous of doing the will of God, we should always be between two fires, not knowing whether we should serve God better by attending to our neighbor or by minding ourselves alone. But here in religion we are free from these difficulties, because it is our institute to occupy ourselves in helping our neighbor, and for that God called us to the Society, and it is He that sets us to that work, so we are certain that we are pleasing His Majesty therein. There outside the walls of religion a man might not dare to hear confessions; or, if he did dare, it might be with fear whether he were pleasing God therein or not, or whether he were in the way of losing his soul thereby or not, but now he rests secure and is certain that he is serving God thereby. You have not set yourself up to be a confessor or to be a preacher or to be a superior, whether you be fitted for the post or not. The superiors who put you in it will render an account to God, for they watch as having to render an account to God for your souls.

St. John Climacus agrees very well with this. Treating of obedience, among other epithets that he applies to it he says that obedience is an excuse before God. If they ask me, "Why did you do that?" I answer, "Lord, because they told me." That is the answer I will give to God and therewith I shall be quite excused in His sight. It is, he says, a safe voyage, a journey that you may make sleeping. A man on shipboard settles down and sleeps, and yet makes his way; his is no care about the course to be taken. The captain looks to that. So the religious, living under obedience, composes himself to sleep—that is to say, he has no trouble or care about what he is to do, but goes his way to heaven and perfection. Superiors see to that; they are the captains and masters of the ship. It is no small thing, it is

a great thing, to traverse the abyss of this world in the arms and on the shoulders of other people. Now this is the blessing which God has given to the religious who lives under obedience, that all his burden is thrown on the shoulders of his superior, and he lives at ease and without care whether this be better or that.

This is one of the things that greatly move virtuous folk to live under obedience and enter religion—to be rid of the endless perplexities and anxieties that they have there in the world, and be sure of serving and pleasing God. For, though the things they choose for their occupation be good, they do not know whether it be given to them to busy themselves with them, since it is not within all men's compass to do all that is good, especially when it exceeds our strength, as is the work of teaching or having charge of others. So a very grave doctor says that he would rather pick up straws from the ground by obedience than engage in great things of his own will, for in the work done under obedience you are sure and safe of doing the will of God, but in the other not. And not only in ministries and occupations with our neighbors does obedience give us security and deliver us from many doubts and difficulties, but also in private matters that concern our own spiritual advancement. If I were there in the world and desired to serve God, I should be troubled and in doubt whether I eat too little or too much, sleep too much or too little, do too little or too much penance, make too little or too much meditation; but here in religion all these doubts are cleared away, for I eat what they give me, I sleep at the time appointed, I do the penance they assign me. All these things are here so well looked after and weighed by superiors that I am quite safe and sure that, in following the order of obedience, I am doing the will of God.

And not only in spiritual matters, but also in temporal, this is a life very restful and void of care. Like a passenger on board a well-victualed ship, a religious has no

need to attend to his own necessities. The superior not only watches over our souls, but over our bodies also. Thus you need not trouble yourselves what you are to eat or what you are to wear, that so you may be more free and disengaged to employ all your energy in loving and serving God—a thing so desirable that Cassian relates of Abbot John how he had first lived thirty years in a monastic community and then thought fit to leave his monastery and choose a hermit's life, to give himself more to contemplation. And so he did, a thing that they could do in those days. In this eremitical and solitary life he lived twenty years more, with so many heavenly delights and in such high and continual contemplation that he used to forget his body, and his senses no longer did their office, and in the evening he did not remember whether he had eaten that day or not. Yet for all this high degree of contemplation, and though his life in solitude was such a success, he determined to abandon the state of solitude and return once more to the monastery, to live in community under obedience; and so he did. The reason that moved him was that, though in the monastery there was not so much of those ecstatic contemplations as in the desert, yet this, he said, was made up for in the monastery by that holy tranquillity and freedom from care which a religious enjoys in his deliverance from all solicitude and care as to the supply of his wants for tomorrow. And much more is it made up for by what we were saying of one's being sure of pleasing God in all that one does, and by the fact that for the time being one cannot do anything more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than what one is doing.

God has given to us who are in religion and live under obedience another Moses, such as He gave to the children of Israel, who goes up the mountain and declares to us the will of God. And so we can say what the children of Israel said when they had any doubt or difficulty: *Let us go to the seer* (I Kings ix. 9). Let us go to consult and ask him who

sees. The prophet called him *the seer*, because he saw and understood from God His will and declared it to the people. Now this is the advantage that we have, that in all our doubts and difficulties we can say, *Let us go to the seer*; let us go to him whom God has given us for prophet, and put in His place to declare to us His will. Thus we enjoy that blessing or blessedness which the Prophet Baruch spoke of in the name of the people of God. *Blessed are we, O Israel, because the things that God requireth and are agreeable to him, he hath made manifest to us* (Bar. iv. 4). Happy and blessed are religious who understand and obey their superiors, that they may bear the burden of their office with cheerfulness and joy, and not go groaning under it.

The Apostle has compassion on superiors and pities them, seeing the burden that they bear. So he recommends us to be ready in obedience thereby to render their burden the lighter. Since the superior has labor enough, and bears a heavy burden on his shoulders in having to give an account to God of what he does and of what you do, do not pile more load upon him by making a difficulty of obeying, instead of letting yourself be governed. A great distress it is to a superior to have a subject so unmortified that he cannot do with him what he would like, and dares not order what he judges proper, but has to tread carefully and in fear, wondering whether he will take it well, whether he will answer back and raise difficulties about what he does not like, and how he shall put the thing to him that he may take it well and like the job. To give an order to such people is like commanding and moving a bad leg or arm when you have to do so; what trouble, what pain and annoyance it costs you! Why is that? Because the limb is out of order, and therefore is not easy to command, but very difficult. So great is the pain that you feel in your leg when you try to do anything with it, that you dare not go from here to there even on business of importance, and you rather

let the affair lapse than suffer such pain. In the same way with a bad arm; you dare not raise your hand to your mouth to eat. A religious order is all one body, as St. Paul says of the Church (I Cor. xii. 12), and each of us is a member of that body. But if you are an infirm and unmortified member, you will give great trouble to your order and to your superior whenever it comes to making use of you and commanding you. Such is the pain that a superior suffers when he sees a subject do things with difficulty and with a bad grace, that, though the thing needs doing, and affairs and ministries are left on his hands to do, he often dares not issue the order for the great pain he feels in commanding a bad arm or leg.

This is an excellent consideration for those who fancy that it is a pleasant and enjoyable thing to be superior and to have spiritual children to order about. Of Rebecca, Holy Writ tells us that she had much desired to have children, and God gave her them; but when she felt the pains of childbirth, and the two children Jacob and Esau were struggling in her womb which was to come out first, she repented her and said: *If the getting of children must be in this manner with so much pain and labor, it were better not to have them* (Gen. xxv. 22). So it happens to superiors when they see one man do things with a bad grace; when another answers back, a third complains, and a fourth grumbles. Then the superior feels the throes of his office, and groans under his load, saying: "Oh, happy the man that is left alone in his corner, and has to take account of nothing but of doing what he is told! Is it this to have children? Is it this to be superior and have subjects? If the business of having subjects is to go on in this fashion, much better have none."

No one knows the greatness of this pain but he who has had experience of it. They say commonly that to be a good superior, and know how to command, it is necessary to have been first a good subject, and have learned by experience

what it is to obey, so that it may be said of him with truth what St. Paul says of Christ: *We have not a prelate who doth not know how to compassionate our labors and weaknesses, but one who hath gone through them himself and had experience of them* (Heb. iv. 15). This is certainly a very reasonable saying; but I say another thing, for which I believe all will judge that I have reason enough. It is that, as to be a good superior and know well how to command, it is a great help to have been a subject and have learned by experience what obedience is like, so also to be a good subject and a good son of obedience, it is a great help to have held the office of superior and to have had to issue commands; for thus one will have learned by experience the great difficulty and pain there is in commanding when subjects do not behave nor obey well, and thus he will have no mind to give such pain to his superior. And for this it is not necessary to have been a high superior; it is enough to have had the charge of commanding some companion or assistant. How many times have you omitted giving him an order because you did not dare, and how many times have you felt giving the order more than you would have felt doing the thing all by yourself? Then anyone may see the pain that the superior feels and the affliction which he suffers when the subject makes a difficulty of obeying orders. These people make their superior go groaning and ready to burst with grief over the burden of his office, and wishing it were possible to do everything by himself rather than command others.

And this is not the greatest affliction of the superior. What he feels most is the evil condition of his subject. For after all the superior is a father, and he cannot help being hurt at the weakness shown by his children, seeing their imperfection and the little virtue they have; and that, whereas they ought with the greatest readiness to undertake such duties as are lowly and humble and more repugnant to sense, for these there are offered all manner of

replies and excuses, and for these there are brought up at once a thousand objections. Thomas à Kempis says that a tepid and half-hearted religious gets ill and indisposed at once for anything he does not like; he never lacks a pretext for not doing what he has no mind to do. We cannot do what we don't want to do; and what we do want we can do at once, though it be the hardest thing to do. St. Chrysostom says: "Great is the force of our own will; it makes us do what we want to do, and unable to do what we do not want." This, then, is the great grief of the superior; this is what cuts him to the heart, the spiritual infirmity of his subject, his imperfection and want of mortification.

Obey, then, your superiors and be subject to them, and do not give them this pain; do not set them groaning and choking with grief under their burden, *for this is not expedient for you*. This may stand for the third reason. See that this is not a thing suited to you either, since you also will go groaning and choking with grief under the burden, and you will lead a very cheerless life, as they find out by experience who go on in that way. See how they will leave you alone for a sick member, and will leave things undone; and that certainly will not be to your credit. See how they will condescend to your imperfection and let you do as you like; and so you will be doing your own will in things and not God's will, which is a thing that we ought greatly to dread, as we have said above.

CHAPTER XI

Of a Very Main and Efficacious Means for Gaining the Virtue of Obedience in Its Perfection, Which Is to Obey the Superior as Christ Our Lord

ONE of the chief and efficacious means for gaining the perfection of this virtue, or rather the chiefest and most efficacious of all, is to consider God in the superior,

and make account that it is God Who commands us, and that we do not obey men, but God Himself. The Apostle recommends this means to us, and repeats it in many places. Thus, writing to the Ephesians (Eph. vi. 5), he commands them to obey even temporal and heathen masters as Christ our Lord. St. Basil well observes: If the Apostle St. Paul commands us to obey the powers of the world as we would Christ, though they were men whose life at that time was steeped in wickedness—and the Apostle St. Peter agrees with him: *Servants, be subject to your masters, not only to the good and mild, but also to the ill-tempered and choleric* (I Pet. ii. 18)—how much more reasonable will it be that we religious should obey, as we would Christ, our spiritual and religious superiors, who desire in all things to do the will of God. And presently he returns to the subject: *Not serving them to their face, as though you desired to please men, but as servants of Christ, doing therein the will of God, serving with hearty good will, as to the Lord and not to men* (Eph. vi. 6-7). We are not to look upon man with our outward eyes, but with our inward eyes upon God, because we no longer live with men, nor have we entered religion to serve men alone, but God. And, writing to the Colossians, he repeats it once more: *All that ye do, do it with good will, as serving the Lord and not men alone, and as hoping for your reward from God* (Col. iii. 23-24), and not from men.

Our Father, resting on this doctrine, greatly recommends this means to us, and lays great stress on it, and often repeats the mention of it in his Constitutions. "It is very conducive to improvement and quite necessary that all should give themselves to entire obedience, recognizing the superior, whoever he be, as holding the place of Christ our Lord." And elsewhere: "It is likewise very necessary that all should obey not only the superior of the whole Society or the house, but also the subordinate officials who derive authority from him, and accustom themselves to look not

at the person whom they obey, but at Him for Whose sake and Whom they obey in all, Who is Christ our Lord." And in the Sixth Part, where he treats more expressly of this virtue of obedience, he lays down this principle: "If you wish to attain to the perfection of this virtue, you must ever keep before your eyes Christ our Lord, for Whose sake and Whom you obey in man."

The force and efficacy of this means will be well seen by this consideration. If Christ Himself in person appeared to you visibly, and bade you do this or that, with what readiness would you obey, with what good will and cheerfulness, with what conformity and submission of judgment! Never would a thought occur to you to discuss or doubt whether it were well or ill done; but blindly, without any discussion, you would embrace it for this reason, which is above every reason: "God commands it, God wills it; it is the better thing." And you would hold yourself very fortunate that He was pleased to make use of you; and the harder and more difficult the thing commanded was, the greater boon and favor you would take the command to be. This, then, is the means which we now suggest. And that we may better appreciate it, as in all reason we should, St. Basil accompanies the suggestion with these words: "Do not take this for a pious reflection of my own; it is a truth expressly laid down in the holy Gospel, where Christ Himself says: *He that heareth you, heareth me* (Luke x. 16)." So the saints explain those words, and say that Christ did not utter them for the apostles only, but for all other religious superiors. Hence came Cassian and all those holy monks to practise this doctrine and take all the commands of superiors for commands of God, because Christ Himself says so and bids us expressly not to look at the person of the superior, but at God in him, even though the superior be not what he ought to be. *On the chair of Moses are seated the scribes and Pharisees; observe, then, and do all things that they tell you, but according to their works do ye not* (Matt. xxiii. 2-3).

Thus what we have to regard in obedience is God and God's will; whether it be declared to us by Himself, or by means of an angel, or by means of a man, or by means of Peter and John, it is all one. We have to take one just as we take the other, because it is God Who commands through the superior, in His name. So St. Bernard quotes St. Benedict saying thus: "The obedience paid to our elders is paid to God Himself, since He Himself says: *He that heareth you, heareth me*. Hence we see that all that is commanded in the name of God by man His vicar—there not being manifest sin—is to be taken not otherwise than as God's command; for what matters it whether it be by Himself, or by His ministers, either men or angels, that He manifests His will to me!"—*Obedientia quae exhibetur maioribus Deo exhibetur; ipse enim dixit, qui vos audit, me audit. Unde quidquid vice Dei praecipit homo, quod non sit certum displicere Deo, haud aliter accipiendum est quam si praeciperet Deus: quid enim interest utrum ipse, aut per suos ministros, sive homines sive angelos, hominibus innotescat suum beneplacitum?* St. Bernard, further on this topic, quotes the common saying and sentence: "Whether it be God or man His vicar that commands you anything, it must be obeyed with equal care and regarded with equal reverence, provided man command not things against God." We must not look for miracles, nor want God Himself to speak to us and teach us in person. *In these latter days God hath spoken to us by His Son*, says St. Paul (Heb. i. 2). And the Apostle and Evangelist St. John: *The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father himself, hath told us* (John i. 18). At present God wishes us to live in faith, and take the superior to be in His place.

St. Augustine says that God has wished us to understand this in what he did to Cornelius the centurion, as related in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts x.). This Cornelius was a Gentile, but a God-fearing man, well practised in good works, in almsdeeds and prayers. God wished to convert

him and teach him the truth of our faith, so He sent an angel to say to him: *Cornelius, thy prayers and almsdeeds have been acceptable before God: wherefore send to call Peter, who dwelleth in this neighborhood, and he will tell thee what thou hast to do to be saved* (Acts x. 4-6). St. Augustine says: "Could not the angel have taught him? Could not God, Who sent the angel, teach him by Himself?" The saint answers: "He sent him to Peter, and would not instruct him by Himself, nor by angels either, but by men; because God wishes to honor man, and that we should obey and subject ourselves to man, especially since He has become man and for our sakes became subject and obedient to men: *and he was subject to them* (Luke ii. 51)." The saints make the same observation on the conversion of the Apostle St. Paul. When Christ appeared to him in person, *he asked Him: Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* He would not declare His will to him Himself, but said to him: *Go into the city, and ask there for a man called Ananias; he will tell thee what thou art to do* (Acts ix. 6-7). St. Bernard says: "What great sweetness of the wisdom of God! The man whom Thou dost speak to Thyself, dost Thou send him to men to be taught Thy will? Yes, because God wishes to dignify man, and give him this honor that we should hold him in God's place, and take the voice of the superior as being that of God Himself"—*O sapientia suaviter vere omnia disponens! Eum cui tu loqueris erudiendum de tua voluntate mittis ad hominem, ut socialis vitae commendetur utilitas.*

And we are not worse off on that account than those to whom God spoke by Himself, but rather our merit is greater, as we merit more by believing the things of faith, which we do not see, than we should if we did see them. Christ Himself accordingly said to Thomas: *Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed* (John xx. 29). So it is in this obedience, whereby we obey our superior as

God. We proceed by way of faith, taking it for granted that all that the superior ordains is the ordinance of God and His will. Thus in a certain way we merit more, and there is more cause for rewarding us, than if we obeyed Christ Himself in person. The saints say of almsgiving, and Christ says it Himself: *Verily I say unto you, the good ye have done to one of my little ones, ye have done unto me* (Matt. xxv. 40). So God will reward a kindness done to a poor child as if it were done to Himself. Some saints even observe that in a certain manner he does more who gives a kind gift to a poor child for love of Christ than if he gave it to Christ Himself; just as he does more, and shows more love for his friend, who welcomes and entertains a servant of his for love of him than if he welcomed and entertained that friend in person. There is not so much to be said for the latter welcome, for the dignity and credit of the person entertained calls for it; but when love for a friend goes the length of welcoming aught that is his for love of him, and giving it the same good treatment that one would give to himself in person, there is more in that. So it is in obedience; and so St. Bonaventure says: "It is a high degree of obedience to obey what God immediately commands and ordains; but in some sort it is a higher degree to obey man for God, and sometimes the merit and reward will be greater; for there is a greater humiliation of heart in obeying man for God, greater denial of self-will, greater resignation of man to God, as it is more to obey a king's servant for love of the king than to obey the king himself. If God came Himself in person to command you, would it be anything much if you obeyed with promptitude and resignation? But for love of Him to obey a man like yourself, and submit to him with entire resignation, is an act in which there is much to reward and appreciate.

CHAPTER XII

That It Is a Necessary Means for Acquiring the Virtue of Obedience to Obey the Superior as Christ

THIS practice of not regarding the person of the superior as man, but looking to Him Whom we obey in this man, Which is Christ our Lord, is not only a means for obeying better and more perfectly, but is absolutely and definitely necessary for gaining the virtue of obedience. He who does not reckon that it is God Whom he obeys, will not only not be perfect in obedience, but will not be a good subject at all; there will always be something wanting in his practice of this virtue. This we will put in a practical light for all eyes to see, as they say, since it is a ground of great importance. If you regard your superior as man, man for man, you are a man as well as he is. And though he be ever so learned, prudent, or holy, you will say that after all he is but a man, that he cannot know all things, nor all the reasons in each case, and that he may well make a mistake and be wrong on some one point or other. This consideration will carry you on to think that, like other men, he has his bias and particular inclinations, that move him to this side rather than to that, and make him not regard your side of the case with such favorable eyes as your opponent's. Above all, when the thing commanded clashes with your love of your own ease, then self-love (a great solicitor) will find acute and dainty reasons in your favor, and a thousand replies and solutions to the contrary. Thus you will never get so far as to take the thing in silence, and entirely leave off your own will and understanding, because, given human reasons, there will never fail you other human reasons to the contrary. But if you do not look upon your superior as a man, subject to errors and miseries, but consider Who it is that you obey in that man, Which is Christ our Lord, Who is sovereign wisdom, goodness, and charity,

and Who can neither deceive nor be deceived, then all your arguments and reasons are silenced, and your submission is complete; for this reason, *God wishes it, God commands it, it is the will of God*, admits of no reply nor solution. So says the Prophet David: *I was silent and opened not my mouth, because thou hast done it* (Psalm xxxviii. 10). I have not complained, O Lord, in my troubles, but like a dumb man I have been silent and opened not my mouth, because I know that Thou hast sent me them. Oh, that we went about things in this way! With what spirit should we go about them! With what promptitude and perfection should we obey! At the voice of the superior we should at once leave the letter of the alphabet that we had begun to form; we should remember that it is the voice of Christ. We should hold it for discourtesy and bad manners to hang back and say: "Just wait; I am coming now, I am coming presently." How we should conform our will! How we should surrender our judgment! All difficulties would be smoothed down thereby.

Hence the solution of a doubt very much to our purpose. How is it that a religious man, who has lived years under obedience and daily practised it, has not got the habit of obedience nor gained the virtue, although all philosophers and divines agree that a virtuous habit is got by frequent acts and practice? The reason and solution is this, that habits are gained by corresponding acts, done for the formal motive of the virtue. Now the obedience of which we speak is a religious virtue, a species of the virtue of religion, which regards God and the worship and honor of His Divine Majesty. Therefore, when in obeying you do not purely regard God in the superior, nor obey because such is the will of God, but rather to please the superior, or because he is a man of position, or for fear of penance and reprimand, or because what they tell you to do is what just suits you, or because the order is given in courteous language, or for other like motives, these are not acts of the

virtue of religious obedience, because the formal and religious motive of obedience is wanting there; and you have not gained the virtue of obedience thereby, nor ever will gain it as long as you live, if you go on in that way; but you may very well get to a politic obedience, such as there is among soldiers and seamen, and in any other body and society, but it will not be the virtue of religion.

Therefore our Father instructed us that we must not obey the superior because he is a very prudent man, or because he is a very good man, or a man highly qualified in any other gifts, but because he holds the place and authority of God our Lord. Set that aside, and fix your eyes on other mere human reasons, then, he said, the force of obedience is lost. It will no longer be the virtue of obedience nor an act of religion, because in that way out in the world you would follow the opinion of prudent men and men of great learning and experience; that is living with men and not with God. The more you regard these human reasons and the more you are guided by them, the further will you stray from the divine way and the true virtue of obedience and let yourself down to obey men alone. Following this train of thought, he goes on to say that we ought nowise to look to see whether it is the cook or the superior of the house that commands us, nor whether it be this man or that, since it is not for their sake that we obey, but for God's sake alone. We should obey subordinate officials with the same humility, readiness, and submission as the superior in chief.

The blessed St. Francis was come to this perfection of obedience. He said: "Among other favors that the Divine Bounty has bestowed on me is this grace, that I could as readily obey a novice who had worn the habit for one hour, if he were given me as guardian, as a very ancient and prudent friar." He went on to say that, according as the superior whom we obey has fewer qualities and less authority, so is our obedience more perfect and agreeable to God. And

it is a common saying amongst us, that he who obeys the cook, refectorian, or sacristan shows more obedience than if he obeyed Father Minister: and more in obeying Father Minister than Father Rector, and Father Rector than the Provincial or General. For obedience rendered to the General may be motived by a consideration of the respect due to his person and place, or by a desire to gain his favor; whereas the obedience paid to a subordinate official can have no other motive but God.

Our Father adds, in confirmation of what has been said, that he who is not entirely obedient to subordinate officials will not be entirely obedient to other superiors either, since true obedience does not consider the person obeyed, but God for Whom and Whom it obeys in all persons. In that other man there is wanting the formal motive of true obedience; since, if he obeyed for God, he would obey also the subordinate officials, who hold in his regard the place of God; and since he does not obey them, it is a sign that, when he obeys other superiors, he does not obey for God, but out of regard to men, and that will not be perfect religious obedience.

CHAPTER XIII

Of Other Great Advantages There Are in Obeying the Superior as Christ

BEYOND those mentioned let this be the first, that we gather great strength and confidence that we shall be able to do what is commanded us and acquit ourselves of it well. There is this difference between God's commands and men's commands, that men often command us what we cannot do, and give us no strength or power to do what they command; but God never commands us anything but what is in our power, and gives us power and strength to do and accomplish what He commands. And here in reli-

gion we have very particular need of this strength and confidence in God, since we are called to do great and difficult things. Not to lose heart in them, it is a great help, and a source of much courage and confidence, to consider that God commands me this, and since He has put me in such an office and ministry, He will enable me to do what He commands. Thus one of the great consolations that they have who go to the missions of the Indies, and to other high enterprises, in the midst of the labors and dangers that present themselves, spiritual and temporal, by sea and by land, is: "Do Thou draw me well out of this; *I am Thine, save me* (Psalm cxviii. 94)." It is this, St. Chrysostom says, that Christ our Redeemer wished us to understand when He sent His disciples to preach and convert the world, and said to them: *Lo, I send you* (Luke x. 3). As though He had said: "Though you are weak, and your enemies strong, and the dangers great, you have nothing to fear, no ground for discouragement, because you go by My order and in obedience to Me. I am He Who sends you, and will deliver you from all the evils and misfortunes that may happen, and will give you victory over all your enemies." This was the comfort of the disciples in all their labors and dangers. And such also should be our comfort in our ministries and in all the things that obedience commands us. God sends me, God commands it; He will give me strength to do it. When God ordered Habacuc to take the dinner he had prepared for his harvest people, and to carry it to Daniel, who was prisoner at Babylon in the lions' den, the prophet answered: *Lord, I never was at Babylon, nor do I know the lions' den; and immediately an angel took him by the hair of his head, and carried him to Babylon, setting him at the mouth of the den* (Dan. xiv. 34-35). This shows us how ready and how willing God is to assist us in the execution of His commands.

Further, this obeying our superior as if he were Christ is a continual exercise of doing ever the will of God. There-

by one may live perpetually kindled and inflamed with love of God and in continual prayer; for to make acts of doing this, the will of God, and rejoicing therein is an excellent and profitable prayer, and a very good way of walking in the presence of God.

Further, he who lives in this way does not mind whether the superior orders this or that, for he makes no account of anything except that in doing what he is ordered he is doing the will of God, and this is his meat, and his delight and purpose in all that he does.

Further, he who considers God in the superior, and makes account that he has put himself in the hands of God, and that it is God Who directs and governs him, lives in great peace. He makes no schemes, he has no cares as to what they are to do with him, since he has placed himself in good hands and is at peace. *The Lord is my shepherd, and nothing will be wanting to me* (Psalm xxii. 1). I am certain that nothing will befall me but what He wills, and He will never will aught but what is best.

Oh, what blessings and spiritual riches should we find if we accustomed ourselves to recognize God in the superior, and to account that we live with God and not with men! A very ancient father used to say that he lived twenty years and more in religion without understanding what manner of thing obedience as unto Christ was, and how one serves God and not men. And do you think that you understand it because you have read it or heard it somewhere? That is not enough; we must learn to put it in practice in the manner that has been laid down, that so we may attain the perfection of this virtue and enjoy all these advantages.

CHAPTER XIV

That God Takes as Spoken against Himself Any Disparaging and Complaining Words Spoken against the Superior

AS, when we obey the superior, we obey and honor God, Whom he represents and in Whose place he stands, so also any disrespect to the superior is disrespect to God. The same reason holds for the one and the other. And Christ our Redeemer spoke in like manner of both. *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me* (Luke x. 16). And St. Paul, writing to the Romans, gives this reason: *Since there is no power but of God, he who resisteth the power and ordinance of superiors resisteth God* (Rom. xiii. 1-2). Holy Scripture is full of this. When the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron, who were those whom God had given them for superiors, because they found themselves in the desert with nothing to eat, and repented of having gone out of Egypt, the text says: *Moses and Aaron said to the people: The Lord hath heard your murmuring against Him; as for us, who are we? Not against us have ye murmured, but against God* (Exod. xvi. 6-7). And when the children of Israel rejected Samuel, and asked to have given them a king, as the other nations had, God said to Samuel: *They have not rejected thee, but me* (I Kings viii. 7). In this way they explain also that text of Isaias: *Think it ye a light matter to be troublesome and burdensome to men, whom God hath sent you to rule and govern you? Understand, then, that it is not a little thing, but a serious thing, for ye are troublesome even to my God* (Isaias vii. 13); since the offense is done to God, and He takes it as done to Him.

How much God abhors these murmurings against superiors, and how He takes the injury for His own, is seen in the great and extraordinary chastisements wherewith He

has punished it. Of Core, Dathan, and Abiron Holy Scripture relates that He punished them with a fearful punishment for murmuring against Moses and Aaron, and saying that they were arrogant in their government. The earth opened and swallowed them down alive to hell, with their women, houses, and families; and fire came down from heaven and burned two hundred and fifty others (Num. xvi. 33, 35). St. Thomas (2a—2æ, q. 93, art. 2) here calls attention to the fact that God chastised more rigorously and signally those who murmured against their superiors than those who outraged immediately God Himself by their idolatry in adoring the golden calf. These last He was satisfied with putting to the sword, but for the former He brought down fire from heaven, and set the earth ablaze, and swallowed them down alive to hell; to give us to understand, says St. Thomas, how greatly God resents any insult and injury done to those whom He puts in His place.

Hence, by the way, we may understand the reason why in Holy Writ the sin of disobedience is compared to the sin of idolatry. *As the sin of divination by diabolic art, so it is to contradict obedience; and as the sin of idolatry to refuse to submit* (I Kings xv. 23); so said the Prophet Samuel to Saul when rebuking him for his disobedience. St. Gregory and St. Bernard give the reason of this comparison: for, as the sin of idolatry and holding consultation with the devil is a renunciation of the worship and reverence due to God, so also the sin of disobedience and disrespect to superiors deprives God of the reverence and honor due to Him, since they stand in the place of God. Furthermore, as the idolater, abandoning the true God, adores and honors an idol of wood, so the disobedient man, ceasing to follow the true rule, which is God, follows the false rule, which is his own judgment and human reasonings.

But to come back to our point, on one occasion God very nearly destroyed all the children of Israel in the wilderness for murmuring against Moses and Aaron, sending them

serpents to bite them (Num. xxi. 5). St. Paul quotes this instance, writing to the Corinthians: *Nor murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer* (I Cor. x. 10). Mary, the sister of Moses, was also punished by God for the same offense with a grievous leprosy, and with that He would have her banished from camp for seven days, notwithstanding all the prayers of Moses for one so dear to him. And he who could hold back the anger of God not to vent itself at one blow upon that idolatrous people, did not succeed in getting his sister pardoned without due satisfaction (Num. xii. 10-15).

From this precedent St. Basil adopted the punishment which he prescribed for any religious who was guilty of murmuring or detraction. He would have the offender separated from the community, not only his person, but also his things. His work was not to be mixed with that of the others; but, as they do with the plague-stricken, his person, his clothes, and all that he had touched or handled was cast out, not to infect the rest; thus he was to be separated from the community like an excommunicate. He was to be left alone; none was to go near him in prayer, at meals, at the hour of repose or work, that so he might be ashamed of himself and amend.

Pope Nicholas I, writing to the Emperor Michael to rebuke him for insolence as having spoken disrespectfully of bishops, cites to this purpose the story of David. When Saul was pursuing him and close in upon him, David found the king one day alone in a cave, where he might have slain him with impunity. But he would not lay hands on him, taking it for a treasonable deed to lay hands on the Lord's anointed, however wicked he was and such an enemy of his. But he ventured to cut off a piece of the hem of his garment; and afterwards, says Holy Writ, David's conscience smote him for having done even that (I Kings xxiv. 6-8). So, says the pope, a good subject ought to act, recognizing in his superior Christ our Lord, not daring to slash the robe

of his superior with the knife of his tongue; and if for once from negligence or weakness, or under the influence of passion, he comes to break out and mention some small fault, he ought at once to be conscience-stricken as David was, for having touched the hem of the superior's garment, however small and minute the fault. And he adds this saying, commonly applied to prelates: "The doings of superiors, though they sometimes seem worthy of reprehension, are not to be slashed with the knife of the tongue, because they hold the place of God"—*Facta superiorum oris gladio ferienda non sunt, quamvis reprehendenda videantur*. Therefore the Lord Himself says: *Thou shalt not murmur against the Gods—Dīs non detrahes* (Exod. xxii. 28). He calls them Gods, and wishes them to be revered as such.

To what has been said it may be added that not only is injury done to God and to the superior, but also much harm is done to the subject, speaking to whom the murmuring is brought out; for it discredits the superior in his eyes, and diminishes the good opinion and esteem that he had of him, and makes him conceive some sort of aversion and disaffection for him. Hereby the authority and force of obedience is greatly impaired, and it may cause the other not to profit by what the superior says or does to him, and that bars the way to his spiritual progress, which should be through the superior. In all these ways it behooves us to be very much on our guard against hindering so much good. The Apostle says accordingly: *Take care that no root of bitterness spring up as an obstacle, and thereby many may be contaminated* (Rom. xii. 15). We should pay great attention to this, even though it be in slight and trivial things; for it would be no slight or trivial thing to deprive the superior of the love, esteem, credit, and confidence which a subject had in him. That is the usual consequence of such murmurings and babblings; that is what we should look to in them, and not to the question of the thing mentioned being in itself grave or light.

CHAPTER XV

*That Obedience Does Not Prevent Our Exposing Our
Wants, and of the Conduct to Be Observed
in Such a Case*

NOT only is it no fault or imperfection to propose a difficulty to the superior, but it is a point of greater perfection, and it would be a fault not to propose it in due season. So we have a rule about it, which bids us expressly: "As excessive solicitude for what regards the body is reprehensible, so a proper care of preserving health and bodily strength for the service of God is praiseworthy, and all ought to have it; and, therefore, when anyone feels that anything is doing him harm, or that something further is necessary as regards food, clothing, lodging, office, or exercise, or anything else, all ought to admonish the superior thereof, or him whom the superior shall appoint for that purpose." Our Father had good reason for giving us this rule; for, though it is true that the chief care, and in a way the whole care, of things necessary for health falls on superiors, yet after all they are men, not angels, and, being such, they cannot know if you have need of anything beyond the common, nor remember all particular cases; so it is needful for you to help them in the matter, reminding them and exposing your want that they may provide. The difficulty is in exposing your want in the proper way, for there is great danger of self-love and private judgment coming in. To proceed without suspicion of that, our Father says there are two things to observe. The first is, before making your statement, to have recourse to prayer, and after that if you judge you ought to represent the case to the proper authority, to do so. That does not mean that you are just to say a Hail Mary, and straightway state anything that your fancy suggests; "prayer" here means that before any statement you should recollect yourself first,

and look whether this exposition of your wants is in accordance with the greater glory of God, or whether you are seeking yourself therein. If the second is the case, you should expose nothing; but if it seems to you to be in accordance with the greater glory of God to expose your want, expose it accordingly.

The second thing to be observed is that, when you have represented your case by word of mouth or by a brief memorandum not to have it forgotten, you should leave the whole care of the matter to the superior, holding that to be the better thing which he shall ordain, without further statement, without importunity coming from yourself or from another, whether your request be granted or not; since each should persuade himself that what the superior, being informed of the situation, shall ordain, will be that which is most in accordance with God's service and our Lord's greater glory. Thus, as well after as before your proposal and representation you must be in a state of great indifference, not only in point of execution for taking or leaving the thing in question, but also in point of being more satisfied and taking that for the better course which the superior shall ordain.

This is the main thing to be observed in exposing our wants, that the petitioner shall be so indifferent about his petition as to remain quite satisfied and pleased, whether the thing be granted or refused. Hereby it will be clearly seen whether he was seeking therein the glory of God, or whether he was seeking himself. If he was seeking purely the will and glory of God, he will rejoice in anything that the superior shall ordain, knowing that to be the will of God declared by the superior. But if he complains and is dejected or murmurs interiorly at a refusal, it is a sign that he was not indifferent nor purely seeking God, but was seeking himself and his own comforts; it was on that account that he was dejected and troubled at being balked of his wish. Thus one of the beneficial results that you

should endeavor to draw from the prayer that you make before exposing your wants, is to bring yourself to an attitude of perfect indifference as to whatever reply may be given you, so that it shall make no more matter to you if the answer be Yes, than if it be No. This is the best disposition that you can bring with you to this exposure of your wants, for in this way you will be as happy and as pleased over a No as over a Yes. It would even be a good plan when the answer is Yes to your request, to reflect and consider whether you would have been as satisfied if the answer had been No. If so, it will be an excellent sign, and you will have every reason to believe that, acting upon this Yes, you are doing the will of God. I say, then, that it is not against the perfection of obedience to expose your wants in this way, since there is in that no departure from indifference and resignation. On the contrary, it argues greater perfection and greater mortification, and to fail to expose them would be manifest imperfection and want of mortification, to say nothing of its being express disobedience to the rule aforesaid. A man feels that something is doing him harm, and that he has need of something else; yet he persists in saying nothing about it, thinking within himself: "If they give it me, so much the better; and if not, all right still." Perhaps such a one will think that this shows mortification and desire of suffering. No, it is not mortification and desire of suffering, since he would feel greater difficulty and repugnance in exposing his wants and going with his request to the superior than in suffering what he suffers at present, for he fancies that the superior will take him for a man who has a great eye to himself and his own comforts. At other times you get this specimen of want of mortification, and lack of indifference: "The other day I exposed some want or other, and the superior blew me sky-high, and answered me in such a decisive way that I went off with my mind made up never more to darken that man's door, nor state any want, except in the case of impos-

sibility to stand the thing any longer." All this comes of your not going about the business of exposing your wants with indifference, and your not having virtue enough to take a refusal, and so you prefer to suffer rather than expose anything.

Here should be observed the deceit of the devil and the strength of self-will, that makes us prefer to suffer the need we are under, according to our own will and fancy, rather than represent it, for fear of being met with a refusal. Even in point of self-love and self-interest, this is an error and a blindness. Let us put the matter at the worst according to your ideas, and suppose the superior does say No. Pray tell me, would it not be better to take your present suffering under obedience and in submission to the will of God rather than of your own will, as you are suffering now? Reflect, besides, on the merit that you would have gained by having exposed your wants and kept your rule, which would be no small merit. Nor would you have any reason to fear the awkward consequences that might ensue after you had exposed your case. They would not then stand to your account, as they would have stood if you had not exposed your wants; but they would be put down to your superior, and put down to God, Who directs and governs you through him. To prevent, then, all these ill consequences, and rid us of all the difficulty and shame that might otherwise have occurred to us in the matter, our Father lays us down a rule about it. Whoever does what the rule commands him, what has he to fear and what has he to be ashamed about? A superior cannot take it ill, but must take it well, that one keeps his rule. And the practice that there is in the Society, so common and ordinary, of having recourse to the superior in very small things, makes it very easy; let not your want of mortification make it difficult.

The whole difficulty of this business lies in exposing our wants with due indifference and resignation, wherefore it

is necessary to enlarge upon it a little further. A man should not go to expose his wants with his mind made up that what he asks is suitable for him; that would be a source of disquiet and trouble in case of things' not going as he thought. But he must go to expose his wants in a state of doubt, awaiting the resolution and determination of the superior with indifference; and in this way he will be at rest, whatever answer he gets. A student going to ask a speculative doubt of his professor, remains content and satisfied with the answer given because he went as a disciple and with a doubt to one who was his master, and so takes it for the truth and the solution of his doubt. In like manner the truly obedient subject should propose to his superior the practical doubts which occur to him, doubting what is best for him, and not having his mind made up one way rather than another until the superior declares what has to be done; and that he must take for the best and surest course, and as such follow it and rest satisfied with it. So, in the prayer that we make before exposing our wants, we must not make up our minds that this or that is more in accordance with the glory of God. The only thing that we have to make up our minds about is that it is a proper thing to lay before the superior, and that in laying it before him we should let it appear that we are not seeking self, but God. But what we should always continue to doubt is whether in sober reality it is a suitable thing or not, until the superior resolves and determines the question.

This is a point to take great notice of, for hence depends our exposing our wants rightly, and quietly acquiescing in any answer that the superior may give. And as this is a thing of such frequent use and practice here in religion, it is very important that we should hit upon the right way of doing it. It would be a great prejudice to religion, and a thing greatly to be deplored, if we got so much out of hand in this matter that superiors could hardly refuse anything to their subjects without there ensuing bitterness,

distrust, and complaints on their part that little love is shown them, they meanwhile remaining obstinate in their view of the matter, and grumbling perhaps at the superior as being rigid and hard, and a man who will go out of his way for nobody. We should reflect that, if we bore with our natural parents' refusing us many things that we asked, and did not take them to be severe on that account, nor lose the love that was due to them—and that while we did not profess at the time to be making war on our will, or gaining the victory over ourselves—now that we do profess all that, it is all the more to be expected that we shall observe the same conduct to our spiritual fathers.

In the days of old, superiors used sometimes to refuse on purpose their subjects' requests, though they might have granted them without inconvenience, simply to practise them in mortification and make them take refusals well; and subjects seized with cheerfulness and alacrity upon the occasion thus offered them of doing violence to their own will. Such was the great desire they had of their spiritual advancement. But how would it be now if not only that which might be granted in reason, but even what is not good for us, cannot be refused us without bitterness and complaints ensuing on our part? How would it be if things came to this pass, that superiors had at times to condescend to their subjects, granting them what they would rather not grant, to avoid greater evil?—a state of things which, as we have said above, a subject ought greatly to dread.

For greater perfection in this representing of our wants, our indifference and abandonment of self should not be confined to the interior, but should also be shown exteriorly in our words and way of putting the thing, that words may march with desires and the exterior aid the interior. That is a good way of exposing our wants, which shows on our part indifference and inward self-abandonment; and the more it shows this disposition, the better will it be. And

if the thing be presented in such a way that even the superior cannot make out to which side the proposer inclines, his only object being that upon the case as stated the superior may see what is fitting, that will be a very excellent way of exposing a want. This may be well understood from the following. There is a rule of the Provincial that at consultations, when he proposes anything to the consultors for them to give their opinion on, he shall propose it in such manner as not to show more inclination one way than the other, that so the consultors may speak their minds more freely, and their seeing their superior inclined one way may not give them occasion to incline to that also. This, then, also is a very good way of exposing our wants to the superior—to expose them in words so plain and simple that the superior may scarcely understand which way your inclination lies, that so you may not give him any occasion of condescending to your wish in view of your weakness, but that he may see for himself the more appropriate course to take, without regard to your inclination and desire.

We have two excellent examples of this in the holy Gospel. The first is the way in which Our Lady put before her dear Son the shortage there was of wine at the marriage-feast to which they had been invited. *They have no wine* (John ii. 3). She did not say: "Supply, Lord, this need, as Thou canst, that they may not be put to the blush," but simply represented the shortage. The second example is the way in which Mary and Martha put before Christ our Redeemer the illness of their brother Lazarus. The holy Gospel says that they sent a message of this tenor: *Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick* (John xi. 3). St. Augustine there well observes: "They did not say, *Come, Lord*; they did not dare to say, *Come and heal him*; nor so much as to say, *Give command, and it will be done*, as the centurion said (Matt. viii. 8); they said only: *Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" To him who loves, no more is necessary

than to signify the fact. This is the way in which we should lay our wants before our superior, in words so plain and simple as to declare the need, but not the desire, nor personal inclination. In this way we shall be quite safe of his not condescending to us, and of our not seeking ourselves.

The way of exposing our wants is expressly laid down by our Father in the Constitutions, where, treating of invalids who find that the climate of a particular region is hurtful to them, he says that such an invalid is not to ask for a change, nor show an inclination that way, but merely to lay before the superior his ailment and indisposition and the inability he feels to do the work, and all the rest he must leave to the superior, who will see whether it is fitting to send him elsewhere, where he will be better and able to do more, or whether it will be to the greater glory of God for him to stay where he is though doing less or even nothing at all, that being more expedient for him. Now if in a matter like this which seems to touch us so closely, our Father requires such indifference and resignation, calling upon us not to ask for any change or show any inclination that way, how must it be in other things which are not of such consequence? But because sometimes we cannot or do not know how to lay open our wants without giving the superior to understand what we desire or are inclined to, there is an excellent and praiseworthy way of doing things which some have, which is, after making their statement clearly and plainly, earnestly to beg the superior not to mind what they say or try to give them satisfaction, but to seek solely the greater service of God, declaring at the same time that this will be to them the greatest charity and consolation, to let them feel therein that they are doing the will of God; whereas it would be a great distress to them to feel that he was humoring them, for then they would think that they were doing their own will and not that of God or of obedience.

CHAPTER XVI

Of Excessive Solitude in What Regards the Body, and How Proper It Is to Avoid Singularities Here

WHILE our Father says that it is a praiseworthy thing to take proper care of bodily health and strength for the service of God, so he says also that excessive solicitude for what touches the body is reprehensible. As we have treated of the first head, so we will treat now of the second. In all things, it is difficult to hit the golden mean; but in what regards our bodily health there is particular difficulty, because self-love is a great schemer here, and sets up for being an eminent physician, saying that this is bad for the chest, that for the stomach, that for the head, that for the eyes; and so, under color of necessity, sensuality and love of good cheer very commonly come in.

On this point St. Bernard very properly inveighs against those who have an excessive care of their health, and under pretense of preserving it draw these differences between one dish and another. He says they are disciples of Hippocrates and Galen, not of Christ, and that they find these differences and peculiarities of articles of food not in the Gospel, nor in Holy Scripture, but in books of medicine. "Beans, they say, are windy; cheese lies heavy on the stomach; milk is injurious to the head; water-drinking does not keep up my chest; cabbage engenders melancholy; leeks kindle bile; fish from a pond or muddy water agrees not at all with my constitution"—*Legumina, inquit, ventosa sunt, caseus stomachum gravat, lac capiti nocet, potum aquae non sustinet pectus, caules nutriunt melancholiam, choleram porri accendunt, pisces de stagno aut de lutosa aqua complexioni non congruunt*. "Good heavens," he says, "what are we to make of you, if in our rivers, our gardens, our storerooms, we can hardly find anything to give you? Consider that you are not a doctor, but a religious, and

ought to make more account of your profession than of your constitution."

St. Bernard goes on to show four very excellent and practical reasons for the propriety of following the community and avoiding singularities. "*Parce, obsecro, primum quidem quieti tuae, parce deinde labori ministrantium, parce gravamini domus, parce conscientiae.*" The first is for your own quiet and ease, for these singularities carry with them these uneasy thoughts: Will they give it me or not? Are they annoyed and bored at giving it me? And if they do give it me, they make me wait; and for once it comes, it often fails to come. No one knows the anxiety there is over this except him who has tried it. It puts me much at ease to be able to get on with the ordinary fare. Secondly, look at the trouble you give over this to the cook, the refectorian, and the server at table; they all have to trot round and round, going and coming to satisfy you; do try to save them this worry. Thirdly, see what a burden you are to the house with your singularities, since the common and ordinary fare stands ready prepared for all, and that is done without trouble; but to have to range beyond this, to suit your whims and unnecessary peculiarities, is very burdensome and tiresome. Fourthly, have regard to conscience, I do not say your own, but your brother's, who sits next to you and eats what they give him, and is scandalized at your not eating; since you give him occasion to murmur interiorly at you, judging you for an epicure; or if he does not thus judge of you, but supposes you need that accommodation, then he forms judgments and inward complaints against the superior and those who should have care of you, for not meeting your needs.

"Some," St. Bernard goes on to say, "seek to justify themselves and back up what they do in this matter by the example of St. Paul, who recommends his disciple Timothy to drink a little wine for the weakness of his stomach. *Do not go on drinking water, but drink a little wine for thy*

stomach's sake and thy frequent ailments (I Tim. v. 23). To this I reply, first of all, that St. Paul does not take this advice for himself, but applies it to another, and that other had not asked for this indulgence either, but it was given him without his trying or asking for it, whereas you do try and ask for this indulgence and singularity for yourself. Thus I do grievously suspect," says the saint, "the prudence of the flesh coming in under color of discretion, and that being sensuality which you think necessity." Secondly he says: "Let them observe that St. Paul is not speaking there of a religious like you, but of a bishop like Timothy, whose life was then so necessary in the infancy of the Church. Give me another Timothy, and I will feed him, if you like, with powdered gold, and give him balsam to drink."

And he adds by the way: "If you do take kindly to this advice of the Apostle to his disciple to drink wine, I would wish you at least also to take kindly to that word which he adds, *modico*, 'very little.' " St. Jerome, writing to Eustochium on the means of preserving chastity, gives as his first advice not to drink wine. "The spouse of Christ should shun wine like poison"—*Sponsi Christi vinum fugiat pro veneno*. Notice this phrase, which well accords with what St. Paul says: *Wine, wherein is luxury* (Eph. v. 18). St. Jerome goes on to say: "This is one of the principal weapons which the devil makes use of in his war against youth. Neither covetousness, nor pride, nor ambition makes such war on them; wine and youth are two incentives and two fires of lust. Why feed the flame with oil? Why, with a body already on fire with youth, add further fire?"

But to come back to our point, what I am now trying to recommend to religious is what Saints Basil, Bernard, Bonaventure, and others strongly charge us; it is that we should try to accustom ourselves to be content with what is the common usage of religious life, and not seek to be singular in anything, so far as may be. To persuade us to this course, it were enough to see that in this way we shall save

many disquieting and distressful thoughts and many judgments of our own and others, as has been said. So, though it were only for our own private interest and our leading a quiet and contented life in religion, we should try to do this, even at the cost of a certain amount of inconvenience, for this quiet and content goes for more than all the benefit that could accrue to us from these singularities. This consideration is enforced by the fact that in this way we shall greatly edify our brethren, give immense satisfaction to superiors, and better please God. Let this be well observed, for it is a very practical and wholesome lesson.

One of the greatest services that you can render, and one of the greatest sacrifices that you can make to God in religion, and one of the greatest penances and mortifications that you can practise, most pleasing to God, most profitable to yourself, most edifying to your brethren, is to pass your whole life in religion without any special privilege or exemption. Live ever in this line tenaciously, and unfailingly observe in all its rigor the common life of religion; be ever content with what is common, the common food that all eat, the common habit that all wear, the common observances that all practise, seeking no privilege, no exemption, no specialty whatever. And since you must do some penance, and have some practice of mortification, let this be your principal penance and mortification. "*Mea maxima mortificatio vita communis*" [St. John Berchmans].

So the saints and masters of spiritual life say that other penances must be moderated in such a way as to leave strength for this, as being the chief penance. Little store will your superior set by your disciplines and haircloths if afterwards you are not content with the ordinary things that others use, but seek your own ease and convenience in dress, lodging, and so forth. But here you see a penance that you have already leave to do; and superiors will be delighted to see you doing it; and you can do it without danger of vainglory, since it does not look like doing pen-

ance, nor do others see whether you are mortifying yourself or not, all the while that it is one of the best of penances, and most pleasing to God that you can possibly do. It looks like a plain and common life, and before God it is a life of singular holiness and perfection, very solid and secure.

On the other hand, one of the things most prejudicial and hurtful to a religious order is for a knot of persons to start practising singularities, and claiming privileges and exemptions, even though it be under color of some hobby of their own, and a title that seems to them amply to justify their doings. So true is this, that St. Bonaventure sets it down for one of the principal sources of tepidity and laxity in religious bodies. Though you have lived long in religion, he says, and done great service in it, yet you may do it vast harm in this matter, since those who entered after you do not see your inward virtue, nor consider how much you have labored before they came; all they see is the present example you give them in observing the rules. In this matter the newcomers look to their elders to lead the way, and as they came first to religion, so also to be first in the exact observance of its Rules, thereby to serve as guides and examples to those who are still in their first fervor trying to serve God. When the contrary happens, they are either shocked at it or proceed to imitate it, relaxing their efforts upon the example of others.

Our Father understood this well, and therefore to prevent the great mischief that might enter in this way, he would have every candidate for incorporation in the Society asked this question: "Will you be content to live in the colleges and fare as the rest fare, without benefit of privileges and peculiarities, without seeking to be treated better than the meanest in the house?" And this question he would have particularly put to men with university degrees, and to others who might come to be men of importance in the order, because in them he thought there might be some

danger of their seeking peculiarities and exemptions. Such claimants do not understand the mischief they make in this matter, though it be in small things; for at once your neighbor thinks that he has labored as much as you and stands in the same need as you, so he puts in for the same special treatment; and then another, who is only a little behind, and then another; and so religious discipline comes to relaxation and ruin. "Much better," says St. Bernard to these breakers-up of union and enemies of peace, "much better that you should be no preacher, or have no dexterity in the management of affairs, than that you should enjoy these peculiarities and exemptions; for you do more harm with the one than you do good with the other." Therefore our Father gives us warning beforehand that in the Society there are to be no exemptions or singularities, and no claim of seniority is to avail to secure these, nor your having been a professor, or a preacher, or a superior. Rather we must hold this for a fixed principle, that you cannot hit upon any policy more ruinous to the Society than to give occasion for the idea that, because you are of old standing or a learned man or a preacher, therefore you have a right to look for exemptions and privileges, and to be treated in some way out of the common, and not as is usual with the rest. Those of oldest standing in the Society, and the most learned, are just the people who should give most edification in all things. It is they who, by their example, should uphold and promote religious discipline, *identifying themselves with the humblest (humilibus consentientes, Rom. xii. 16)*. This is the end that learning and seniority should serve in the Society.

CHAPTER XVII

*An Answer to a Scruple about the Duty of Looking
After One's Health*

SINCE the chief and best warranted motive that presses upon us to adopt some singularities is the duty that we seem to have of looking after our health and preserving our lives, we will repeat here some things that doctors of theology say on this subject. In the first place they observe, and it is common doctrine, that it is one thing to kill oneself, and take means to shorten one's life on purpose—and that is unlawful and a very grave sin—but quite another thing to take no trouble to preserve one's health or life, nor seek to prolong it; and that, they say, is not unlawful, but lawful. Thus, no one is bound to endeavor to lengthen his life or preserve it by eating dainty dishes or extraordinary foods; or to live in the healthiest places, though he knows that there he shall live longer and enjoy better health; or, again, to get for himself the most wholesome foods that agree best with his constitution, though he know for certain that by that means he shall prolong his life and enjoy better health. This is clear, since the contrary would be a condemnation of all the fasts, abstinences, and penances of the Church and religious orders. Nay, theologians and saints say that to go in search of these things is ordinarily reprehensible, especially in religious. Neither is one bound in sickness to look out for out-of-the-way, very precious, and costly medicines to save one's life, or rare and eminent physicians, but all that is blameworthy in a religious man, who makes profession of humility and poverty. Enough to use common and easy means, that ordinarily meet the case; for bodily life and health is a temporal good, and of very little value in comparison with the life of the soul, and so God does not oblige us to more than this.

And not only from what is extraordinary and out of the

way is it lawful to keep aloof, but also from what is common and ordinary. So we see that religious and servants of God eschew the sustenance, sleep, and bodily cheer that others commonly take and that they might take lawfully, and we grant them that, not only as a lawful, but even a holy practice, though they know that it must in some sort injure their health and that in this way they will shorten their lives. As it is lawful, and a thing of high virtue and merit, to expose oneself to danger of death and give one's temporal life, not only for one's neighbor's soul, but also for his temporal life, as they do who serve and minister to the plague-stricken and persons suffering from other contagious diseases, so it is also lawful and very virtuous conduct to expose oneself to a small loss of life, or a little injury to bodily health, in view of helping one's own soul by the benefit of mortification. If, to gain a morsel of bread for the support of his family and the keeping up of some little respectability, a man crosses the sea and goes to Flanders and the Indies, and endures many bad nights and worse days, with much injury to health and danger of life, and we put that down as lawful, how much more must it be a lawful and holy thing to do the like for the spiritual health of one's own soul, to keep the flesh subject and submissive to the spirit, that it may not rebel against it and commit some treason! This is the meaning of doing penance; and if we abandon that, we shall have to abandon also all the penances that are practised in the Church of God.

There is a further question discussed by theologians, whether it is lawful for a servant of God who has a great pain in his liver or stomach, or a very painful wound, to seek no cure and use no medical treatment, but suffer for Christ, supposing there is no danger of death; and they answer Yes. They quote the instance of St. Agatha, who, when St. Peter came in the figure of an old man to cure her breasts that had been cut off by the persecutor, would not consent to his curing her, saying that she had never used

any bodily remedy. They quote also the example of many spiritual and holy men, who preferred to suffer a pain in the liver or stomach without applying any remedy, on purpose to mortify their flesh and subject it to the spirit, and to feel and partake somewhat of the pains and Passion of Christ, and were very content and quite cheerful, and benefited by those pains.

Further, to make it evident that neither health nor even life is so valuable as to oblige us to pay such regard to it, or be so industrious to secure and keep it as some imagine, theologians put this case. Suppose a man is sure to die unless they cut off a leg or an arm; they ask if he is bound to submit to the amputation, and they say No. They quote what a certain patient said in such a case: "Health and life are none so precious or desirable as to oblige me to suffer so much pain for them"—*Nam non est tanto digna dolore salus*. Theologians say that a man is not bound to use medicines to prolong his life, though he knows that it will be shortened if he does not use them. For instance, if the doctors ordered him to purge every month, or every year, and take such and such medicines, or to have an incision made on one side and another on the other, he is not bound to do it, although he were to die ten years earlier in consequence. The same doctors of theology say further that, though a man knew that by drinking wine, or drinking it iced, he should shorten his life, he is not bound under mortal sin to give up the wine or the iced drink. Let us apply this, then, to our purpose. If to tickle the palate, to drink cooling draughts, to eat savory and tasty things, and to enjoy suchlike luxuries, men take no account of the preservation of their health, or the prolongation of their life, nor look to that at all, and we do not condemn them on that account, why should a religious be so careful of his health as to upset regular observance, fancying that this will do him harm and that will do him more good! But grant that it is no fancy, but fact: let us put in one scale the need and

the benefit likely to be derived from the remedy—a very uncertain quantity—and in the other the trouble and worry, your own and other people's, and the disedification thence ensuing, and other pernicious consequences, and we shall see that this side incomparably outweighs the other. What people in the world do, and possibly you have often done it yourself—to enjoy a delicacy and a tit-bit—is it not reasonable to do the like to enjoy religious life, and go with the community and give no scandal and disedification to your brethren?

At least let us gather this lesson from what has been said, that one is under no obligation to aim at getting these special comforts. As for what regards the scruple, you may rest assured that there is no ground for it, even though you get less than you do get when things are at their worst, whether in health or in sickness, and though you do suffer somewhat in health thereby. You will do the better and the more perfect thing by suffering something and taking it for penance, instead of going about to procure comfort and convenience, complaining that they do not look after you, or make such account of you as they ought. God does not require us to look so much after our health as that.

On those words of Christ: *He that shall inordinately love his life shall lose it; and he that shall scorn and cast it off for me shall find it in life everlasting* (Matt. xvi. 25), St. Bernard says: "Hippocrates and his school teach us how to preserve our lives in this world; Epicurus teaches us to set our hearts on pleasure, and seek our comfort with great zest; Christ our Redeemer teaches us to lose our lives, and scorn the delights and comforts of the body, and make all that of little account in comparison with the good of the soul. See, then, which of these masters you wish to follow; see whether you wish to be a disciple of Christ, or of Hippocrates and Galen." We may add here that we see by experience that those who give way to these fancies and peculiarities are always ill and out of sorts, and often lose

their health by the very means they take to preserve it, while, on the other hand, those who, trusting to God and to obedience, follow the community and adapt themselves to everything, live sound, healthy lives in religion. They who ate lentils and did not drink wine, says Holy Scripture (Dan. i. 15), had better and plumper faces than their companions who ate and drank of the table of the king.

Cassian makes another good point. He says that there are some who wish these special comforts to be supplied them, not so much for any need that they have of them, but as a mark of dignity, a piece of presumption and pride. They want more to be made of them than of others, and some difference of treatment accorded, because they are ancients in religion, preachers, professors, and masters of arts. These people, says Cassian, are never very spiritual men, nor distinguished for virtue. Those ancient fathers, he says, who in point of discipline shine as luminaries in the Church of God, were great lovers of common life, great enemies of singularities, and these we ought to imitate.

But we do not mean by this that no one should go to the trouble of representing his necessities, since it is clear that in a large community there are always some who need special treatment, since not all have the same health or vigor of body. It is well that all should understand this, and no one take occasion from what we have said to judge others; but rather, when they see anyone having things specially provided for him, to reckon that he needs it, and have compassion on him and his infirmity. Be not, says St. Bernard, like those who "feel envy where they ought to feel pity and compassion. Such people take their neighbor for fortunate in having better diet and better treatment, while he counts himself unfortunate and miserable for being subject to this necessity and unable to follow the community, and feels that more than the ailment itself." There is no envy on our part, nor grumbling, but rather pity, when we see him who is particularly unwell, treated with more abun-

dant and costly medicines: so, when you see one suffering from this need of special treatment, do not envy, but pity him, and be very thankful to Heaven that you are in no need of more food, more sleep, more clothing, more comforts, but can afford to fare as the community fares. Anyone, says St. Bernard, who looks with envious eyes on the special allowances made for others, shows clearly low thoughts and a heart inclined to sensuality and self-indulgence.

The saint ends with a conclusion wherewith I also may well conclude: "I say not this, my brother, because I have at present any complaint to make on this score, but because I think it necessary to admonish and forewarn you, since there are among you tender and delicate subjects who need some dispensation, either for age or infirmity. But I return hearty thanks to God our Lord that I see many so careful of themselves, so anxious for self-improvement, that, far from these low and unworthy thoughts, they leave out of account the weak and needy among them, and have no eyes to see their peculiarities, because their gaze is fixed on themselves; they are ever complaining of themselves and thinking that they do less than all the others, and so they take them for their superiors and their betters, according to the advice of the Apostle St. Paul, *each thinking the other his superior* (Phil. ii. 3)."

He adds another piece of advice which is very good—not to take any account of those who need special allowances, nor cast an eye upon that, but fix our eyes on one or two of those whom we see to be the most fervent and exemplary in the house, and try to imitate them. And he relates an instance of one of his monks, which, he says, gave him great satisfaction. This monk came to him very early one morning, and said to him: "Woe is me, father, this night at matins I counted and considered thirty virtues in one of my brothers, and not one of them do I find in myself." This is a very good practice, to look at and study our brothers' virtues. "And be this the fruit of our discourse," says the

saint, "always to regard in others the height of their virtues, and not what is imperfect and deficient in them; but in ourselves, on the contrary, not anything that may be matter of vain presumption, but only what makes for true humility. For what advantage is it that you can work harder or fast more rigorously than another if that other surpasses you in virtue, is more humble, more patient, more charitable than you are? What matter does it make that he cannot fast or work as hard as you do? Henceforth always see in your brethren all the good that is in them, and that you have not; and in yourself do not look at the good that you think you have, but look how far you fall short of the attainment of perfection"—*Esto magis sollicitus ut scias quid desit tibi*. In this way we shall maintain ourselves in humility, and advance much in religious perfection.

CHAPTER XVIII

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IT is related of Rabandus, a Frankish nobleman, whose vocation and coming to religion was a singular miracle, that he found this life very rough and hard, having been brought up in very easy circumstances; and the Abbot Porcarius, who was then superior of the convent, allowed him sundry special and extraordinary comforts, better suited to his constitution, and ordered them to be given him; but not only did he not thrive thereupon, but every day became more delicate and cranky. It happened one day, when he was at dinner with the rest, who were served only with a morsel of dry bread and some beans, he thought he saw two venerable old men—one was bald, and had keys hung about his neck, the other was a monk—with a crystal vase in their hands, and making a round of the refectory they gave to each monk on his plate something that they

drew out of the vase; but him alone they left out without giving him any, and looked at him with a severe and angry countenance. But he got as much as he could from the plates of those who were seated about him something of what they had had given them; and tasting it he found it so delicious that all the delicacies he had eaten in his life he thought were not so tasty and could not be compared with that. Having seen this vision three times, he went to his abbot and told it him, and asked him earnestly to tell him who those two old men were that he had seen. The abbot fell in with it at once and understood that they were the Apostle St. Peter, patron of the house, and Honoratus, its founder; and that the reason why they gave him none of that food which they distributed to the others was because he did not follow the community in all things, but had sundry special dishes. Rabandus, hearing this, did violence to himself, and resolved to follow in all things the common rigid and severe discipline of religious life, which he found much easier and lighter than he had expected. A little while after, he saw the same saints making their usual distribution of that food to the monks, and they gave him some of it also, wherewith his soul was much comforted, and he resolved to bear any hardships and severities that he found in religion.

Caesarius has an example very like this, of a Cistercian monk, a monk rather in habit than in works. Being a physician, he was outside the enclosure the greater part of the year, and appeared in the monastery only upon high festival days. One feast of our Lady he was with the rest singing in choir, and saw our Blessed Lady enter the choir, all radiant and shining, and from a box she held in her hand she poured with a spoon something into every monk's mouth; but when it came to his turn, she passed by without giving him any, telling him he needed none of her drink, since he was a doctor and got good things for himself. This reproach so sensibly afflicted him that, entering into him-

self, he changed his life, never going out of doors without orders, and mortifying himself much. The next feast of our Lady she came as before to regale the religious, and approached him and, stopping, said to him: "Now that you have amended your life and preferred my medicines to yours, see here some of my beverage; drink as the rest." After that he remained with great delight steady in the monastery, holding all the pleasures of the world in disgust. That drink was devotion, which makes all things sweet.

The same Caesarius relates that there came to the Monastery of Clairvaux a clerk, very fastidious in his diet, who could not stomach the coarse conventual bread; the mere thought of having to eat it made him waste away. Christ our Lord appeared one night to him, and presented him with a piece of the same bread and bade him eat. He replied he could not possibly eat that barley bread. Christ dipped the bread in the blood of His side, and told him to eat it. He tasted it, and it tasted sweeter than honey; and henceforth the bread and all the other coarse food of the community, which he could not touch before, became to him extremely delicious.

The chronicles of the Order of the glorious St. Francis tell us of that famous assembly which was called the Chapter of Mats, because the cells were in the open field, with divisions made by mats between them. Here were assembled some five thousand friars; the blessed St. Dominic was also there. They say that such was the fervor and spirit of penance among those holy religious that it was necessary to curb them. St. Francis being informed that many wore shirts and coats of mail next to their skin, and others iron hoops, and that thereby they were much weakened and hindered from praying and serving the order, so that some actually died, gave an order of obedience that all who had coats and hoops of iron should leave them off and bring them to him, and there were found five hundred

such shirts and iron hoops. While they were thus assembled in chapter to treat of the progress of their order, it was revealed to St. Francis that the devils were holding an opposition chapter in a hospital between the Portiuncula and Assisi; and that there were met there more than eighteen thousand devils. Various shrewd devices were then suggested, how to combat and destroy St. Francis and his order and followers. At last there stood up a devil, more artful and subtle than the rest, and he gave his advice to this effect: "This Father St. Francis with his friars are so fervent in their flight and separation from the world, so strong in their love of God, so busy at prayer, and such adepts at tormenting their bodies, that at present you can do little or nothing against them. I advise for the present not to worry yourselves to death so much about them; but let us leave them until this Francis closes his eyes, and there come to be more friars, and we will find entrance into his order for youths without zeal for perfection, and dignified old gentlemen, and dainty-living nobles, and learned men full of arrogance and with a weakly constitution, and they will receive them all to keep up the honor and swell the numbers of their order. And in this way we will draw them to self-love, and love of worldly things, and desires of science and honors; then we shall overcome them and bring many over to our will." This plan met the warm approval of all, and they were much satisfied and elated at this prospect.

TWENTY-SECOND TREATISE

ON THE OBSERVANCE OF THE RULES



CHAPTER I

Of the Great Favor and Benefit God Has Done Us in Encompassing Us with Rules

AMONG other favors that the Lord has done us in religion, it has been a great thing to encompass us with rules and holy admonitions, that so we might be better guarded and defended from our enemies. The saints very well compare the evangelical counsels to the outer wall or barbican of a city. As a city is better fortified when it has not only a wall, but an outer wall, so that, if the enemy break through and batter down this, the townsmen have still the wall itself left to defend and guard them, so God has done this favor to religious orders in spiritual things. He has encompassed and guarded us in the first place with the strong wall of His law and commandments, and also with another wall or barbican, the rules and constitutions of the order, so that upon the assault of our enemy, who keeps up a continual war against us, at most he may batter down and break through some part of the outer wall, but the main wall of the law and commandments of God still remains intact, and we are safe. A great mercy of God is this, that the temptation that assails you, at most makes you fail in a rule, which is not binding even under venial sin, and that now you make more account of breaking a rule than there in the world perhaps you would have made of grievous sins.

Hence it will be seen how great is the mistake that some weak religious make, who, when they see that they commit faults against the rules and fall into sundry imperfections, fancy that, for their being thus backward and careless, they would do better there outside in the world than being so imperfect here in religion. This is a very grave temptation of the devil, since it touches us on so vital a spot as our vocation. He wishes nothing more than to keep us exposed

in the world, outside of the outworks and barbican of the rules and evangelical counsels, because then he will play his artillery against the unprotected wall of the law of God, and perchance he will soon cause you to fall into some mortal sin, which now he cannot so easily accomplish, since you are guarded and defended by the barbican, which receives all the blows, and where all the lances of the enemy are shattered, you meanwhile remaining far from falling into mortal sin.

One fault of the kind you would commit in the world weighs more than the many faults and imperfections which at present you have in religion. Hence, though it seems to you that you live a lukewarm and unprofitable life, bring it home to yourself that you are in a much better state than if you were living in the world. This is one of the reasons why we have to esteem greatly the religious state, and to give daily endless thanks to God for a mercy and benefit so great as that of His having called us to it. And should there be no other good in the religious state but this, it would yet be an exceedingly great blessing, and on this account alone much to be desired and esteemed. Think you it a small thing that, while others walk in the open among the bulls and wild beasts, you are on the parapet looking on from your position of safety? That, while others are sailing amid the tempests and waves of the sea, you are safe in harbor? While others are in the midst of the river of Babylon in danger of drowning, you repose in peace and tranquillity on the bank? But the rules and evangelical counsels are a still greater benefit in this, that they greatly help us to keep the commandments of the law of God; for he who vows to keep the perfection of the counsels very easily secures his observance of the commandments; while, on the contrary, he who has no mind to keep the counsels or to strive after perfection will with very great difficulty keep the commandments of God. It is in this way that St. Thomas explains those words of Christ our

Redeemer, which are recorded in the Gospel: *Of a truth I say to you, that the rich with difficulty shall enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xix. 23). Do you know why? asks St. Thomas. "Because it is difficult to keep the commandments, by which we have to enter the kingdom of heaven, if we do not try to keep the counsels and aim at perfection." But for him who strives to keep the counsels, the keeping of the commandments will be very easy; because it is clear that to give up riches and to possess nothing as your own, nor even to use anything as your own, is a very sure way of being far from coveting your neighbor's goods. And to pray to God for those that persecute you, and to return good to those that do you evil, serves to keep us very far from hating our enemies; and he that never swears, even though what he says be true, is not likely to swear to a falsehood. Hence the saints agree that the rules and counsels which we strive to keep in religion are far from being a burden, but rather help and assist us in the bearing of the burden of the commandments of God.

St. Augustine explains this very well by two comparisons. Speaking of the sweetness of the law of grace, he compares its burden to the burden wings are to a dove. The wings are really no burden to it, nor do they in any way embarrass the dove, rather it is the wings that make it nimble and able to fly. In like manner the wheels of a cart are extra weight, nevertheless this weight is not only not a burden but rather a help to the oxen, and greatly lightens the load, whereas, had it not been for the wheels, they would have been unable to move one half the weight. In like manner the evangelical counsels which we have in our rules, not only do not weigh us down or embarrass us, but rather act as wheels, by which means we bear the weight and the yoke of the law of God with great ease and sweetness, which those in the world bear with sighs and groans, falling a thousand times under its weight because they have not these wheels or wings. For these reasons,

then, we ought to be very thankful to God, to esteem greatly our rules, and to be fervent in their observance.

CHAPTER II

That Our Perfection Consists in the Observance of the Rules

KEEP the law and the counsel and it shall be as life to thy soul, and grace to thy lips (Prov. iii. 21-22). Keep the commandments and the counsels, says the Wise Man, and they shall be life to your soul, and grace, honeyed and sweet for your throat and spiritual palate. And the Royal Prophet says: *How sweet are Thy words to my lips; they are sweeter than honey to my mouth!* (Psalm cxviii. 103). St. Jerome, in his letter to Helvidius—which is a reply to twelve problems or questions which he had proposed to him, of which the first was: How shall anyone be able to become perfect?—replies in those words which Christ our Redeemer used to the youth who, the Holy Scripture tells us, came to Him and on bended knee asked Him: “Master, what shall I do to be saved, because I desire greatly to assure myself of my salvation?” Jesus said to him: “Thou knowest the commandments; keep them and thou shalt be saved.” And the youth replied: “Master, these have I always kept even from my earliest years.” St. Mark the Evangelist says that Jesus *looked upon him and loved him* (Mark x. 21). By the manner and graciousness with which He regarded the youth, Jesus showed exteriorly His love. Virtue and goodness are things to be greatly loved, and they attract the eyes and heart of God. Jesus then said to him: *One thing is lacking to thee: if thou wilt be perfect: go, sell, all that thou hast, and give it to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; then come and follow me* (Mark x. 21). In this, then, says St. Jerome, perfection lies, in adding the evangelical counsels to the commandments of God.

The Venerable Bede says that to those who do not content themselves with the keeping of the commandments, but keep also the counsels, there belongs that second crown, which God commanded Moses to put on the first: *And upon that another golden crown* (Exod. xxv. 25). By this second golden crown is to be understood the added reward and glory they shall possess in heaven who here below do more than others, keeping, besides the commandments, the evangelical counsels; and it is for this reason Christ our Redeemer added: *And thou shalt have treasure in heaven* (Matt. xix. 21). Not only shall you receive eternal life if you keep the evangelical counsels, but you shall be very rich in heaven, and your treasure there shall be very great. This mercy God has done to religious, that not only has He called us, not only has He *drawn us out of darkness into His admirable light* (I Pet. ii. 9), that is, to the light of faith, as He has called all other Christians; not only does He wish to raise us to the kingdom of heaven with His dear ones and elect, but He wishes to favor us so that we may be great in the kingdom of heaven, and it is for this reason that He calls us to the keeping of the evangelical counsels, which is that state of perfection that we vow in religion.

It is, then, but reasonable that we should correspond to so great a gift, which indeed we do if we keep that which our holy Father asks of us, "that all who enter the Society and live in it should desire to keep all the constitutions and rules in their entirety, also the manner prescribed for living in it, and that they should strive with their whole heart and strength, with the help of divine grace, to keep them perfectly." In this is our progress and perfection; if we do this we shall be good religious, and if we keep them perfectly we shall be perfect religious.

Our very name bespeaks the obligation we lie under; for we call ourselves *religious* because we have bound and tied ourselves to the observance of the rules and evangelical

counsels. *Religious* means one *bound or tied again*; for not only are we bound by the commandments, as are all other Christians, but also by the evangelical counsels, which are contained in the rules. For the same reason, also, the Church calls religious *regulars*, on account of the obligation they have of keeping their *regulae*, or rules. This name is very honorable and is used in canon law; while the Council of Trent, and several popes in their apostolic letters, call us *clerks regular*. Let us, then, strive to bear the name worthily; let us be very *regular*, and truly observant of our *rules*, so that our life may be in accordance with the name we bear. St. Bernard, writing to some fervent religious, urging them to go forward in fervor, says: "I ask and earnestly beseech you to be ever most diligent and solicitous in the keeping of the institute and rules of your order, so that, in turn, the institute and rules may keep you." This means that, by keeping the rules of our order, these same rules will protect us and lead us to perfection.

In the Book of Judges (xiii. 5; xvi. 19) Holy Scripture records that the strength of Samson lay in the tresses of hair on his head; and when these were shorn he lost his strength and was easily conquered and bound by the Philistines. We have here a clear figure of what we have been speaking about. In the case of Samson God placed his strength in the hair of his head, since he was a *Nazarene*, which was then the same thing as being a religious; and in conformity with their rules and customs he was obliged to grow his hair, and not to use a razor on his head. When, then, his hair was cut by deceit, his secret having been discovered through the infatuate love which he bore for his wife Delilah, he lost along with his hair his religious state and his strength. In like manner our virtue and strength lies in the keeping of our rules, which, no doubt, seem trifling and of small importance, like locks of hair; because we are Nazarenes, that is to say, religious, and we are obliged to cultivate and wear these locks of hair; and

if you have them cut, you will become like another Samson, without strength, and be easily conquered and manacled by your enemies the Philistines, who are the devils. And as, when Samson's hair grew again, God gave him back his strength, so He will give back yours, if you once more set yourself to the observance of the rules and ceremonies and minute points of discipline of your order.

CHAPTER III

*That though Our Rules Do Not Bind under Sin, We
Should Not Make That an Excuse for Neglecting
to Observe Them*

OUR rules and constitutions do not bind under sin, either mortal or venial, and this also holds good for the other ordinances and commands, except when the superior shall command in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, or in virtue of holy obedience, as is set down in the Constitutions. Our holy Father did not wish to bind us under sin; but no one should make this an excuse for breaking them, which is apt to be a very common temptation, whereby the devil makes many to fail in the observance of their rules. Our Father, desiring on the one hand to remove from us any occasion or snare of sin which might rise from the obligation of the constitutions and rules; and, on the other hand, wishing that we should keep them entirely and perfectly, without dropping any degree of perfection, says: "Instead of fear of offense let there come in love and desire of all perfection, and of doing what will be to the greater honor and glory of Christ our Redeemer." And in the beginning of the Constitutions and Rules, he says: "The interior law of charity, which the Holy Spirit is wont to write and imprint on our hearts, is to aid us hereto;" which is what the Lord said by St. John (xiv. 15): *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

For him who loves, it is enough to know the wish of the beloved. For a good son, it is enough to understand the will of his father, without further apprehensions or fears. Whoever breaks rules and holds them of little account because they do not bind under pain of sin and hell, is no good son, and no good servant. Otherwise, I ask you, what sort of servant would he be who had made up his mind never to do anything that his master commanded unless he commanded it sword in hand and under pain of death? And what sort of wife would she be who said to her husband: "I don't mean to be a bad woman, or to be unfaithful; but beyond that, let me tell you, I am going to do everything that I take a fancy to do, though I know that it will annoy you"? Now, such are they who, because rules do not bind under pain of sin and hell, go and break them. This is the way of slaves, who serve only for fear of the whip and chastisement. An author has said: "Bad people keep away from sin and evil-doing for fear of pain and chastisement; good people keep away from sin and evil-doing for love of virtue"—and to please and better satisfy God.

St. Gregory relates that a monk called Marcius betook himself to the solitude of the desert on the Marsu Mountains [Abruzzi]. Here he fastened himself to a rock by means of a chain attached to his ankle, so that he could not go further than the length of the chain. St. Benedict, hearing of this, sent one of his disciples to him to tell him: "If you are the servant of God, let not an iron chain bind you, but the chain of Christ." The monk immediately obeyed and took off the chain, yet he, nevertheless, never went further than where he was accustomed to go when fettered by the chain. So with us, our Father has taken off the chain of iron, not wishing to tie us with rules binding under obligation of sin and hell, but with the chain of the love of Christ. That should be a more forcible motive to induce us to keep the rules than the iron chain of fear of sin and punishment.

But here there are two things to observe. The first is that, when the constitutions and rules contain any matter that bears on the vows that we take, or is forbidden by natural law, then they will bind us under pain of sin, not by virtue of the rule and constitution, but by reason of the vow or natural law, as we observed above, speaking of poverty. The second thing to observe is that, though the rule of itself does not bind under pain of sin, yet one may sin in breaking it, by there being some intermixture of negligence, laziness, disparagement or disregard of rule, or other like things, as St. Thomas well observes, speaking of the rules of the Order of St. Dominic, which also of themselves do not bind under pain of any fault, either mortal or venial.

CHAPTER IV

That although the Matter about Which a Rule Deals Is Trifling, This Is No Excuse, but Tells Rather against Him Who Does Not Keep It

ANOTHER very common temptation which the devil is apt to put in our way, so that we may fail in the observance of some of the rules, is to say that the things enjoined are trivial and of small importance, and that it is not in them that sanctity and perfection consists. By this means, aided by our laziness and tepidity, he brings it about that we often fail in their observance; so it is necessary that we should prepare ourselves against this temptation. In the first place I say that he who excuses himself, saying that the matter is of small importance, really does not excuse himself or lessen the gravity of the fault, but rather in a certain way makes it all the graver. This is the teaching of St. Augustine, who, treating of the disobedience of Adam, says that, as the obedience of Abraham, as shown in his readiness to sacrifice Isaac, his son, is enhanced in proportion to the difficulty of the thing commanded, "so

the disobedience of Adam in Paradise was so much the more grievous in proportion to the facility and lightness of the precept which God imposed"—there was no excuse for him.

What excuse could our first parents have for not obeying so easy a command as not to eat of but one sole tree, when they had so many others to choose from, and perchance these bore even better fruit? What would Adam have done if he had been commanded to do something hard? What, if God had commanded him to sacrifice his wife, as He had commanded Abraham to do with his son? How could he have sacrificed her, he who, rather than displease her, would not refrain from eating an apple which God had forbidden? Just the same way is the fault and disobedience of anyone more grave when he breaks rules that are easily kept. St. Bonaventure observes: "Faults in little things are more blameworthy and reprehensible the easier it was to avoid them and not fall into them." If what was commanded was onerous and difficult, you might then have had some apparent excuse, but in a thing so easy, what excuse can you have?

Further, I ask you, how shall I believe that you will obey in hard and difficult things, if you do not obey in things light and easy? Is it to be thought that he will be up to the greater, who is not up to the less? St. Bernard says: "He who cannot make up his mind to restrain his tongue and his appetite is not a monk." This was a common principle among those old ascetics, for which reason they always began their exercises with abstinence, for they said that if in this, which was exterior, people will not conquer themselves, how shall they conquer themselves in the interior, which is more difficult? How should they hold out against spiritual and invisible enemies, *against the spirits of wickedness in the high places* (Eph. vi. 12), if in those exterior things, and things which could be seen, they were at a loss how to conquer?

Hereby we shall be able to understand whether those

desires are true or false, which we sometimes conceive to undertake great things, as for example, to suffer great hardships and mortifications, or even martyrdom in the land of the infidels; for if here you are unable to put up with some slight mortification, if here you break one rule or another solely because you will not accept the mortification of going to ask for leave, how am I to believe that you will undertake arduous and difficult things? St. Bonaventure aptly says: "Many say that they desire to die for Christ, who do not wish to suffer for Christ things very trivial, and words very light. How indeed shall one whom a falling leaf frightens not flinch under the stroke of the uplifted axe? If some small word which another says to you, which, after all, is only an 'airy nothing,' upsets and throws you out, how will you manage when real persecutions arise against you? What a state you will be in when false testimonies of the most slanderous kind are brought against you, and, more than this, when the world even believes them?" It is for this reason that St. Bonaventure advises that we should train ourselves to conquer and mortify ourselves in small things, for he who does not know how to mortify and curb his will in these things, will still less be able to do so in matters of greater moment. To quote the saint's own words: "We should accustom ourselves to bear patiently small trials, because he who does not learn to bear the lesser will never succeed in overcoming the greater."

Denis the Carthusian relates that a certain novice, who started with much fervor the first days, as sometimes happens, came afterwards to relax his efforts and grow tepid. At first everything seemed easy, but after a while humble duties and practices of mortification became unbearable. Among other things, the patched and threadbare habit which novices usually wear was a sore trial to him. Now, while taking a nap a little after midday, he saw in a vision Christ our Redeemer, tired and exhausted, bearing a huge

and heavy cross, which He was trying to carry up a flight of steps; but the cross was so large that He could not manage it for the stairs. The novice, seeing this, was moved to compassion at seeing Him in such trouble, and wanted to help Him, saying: "I beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thou wouldst be pleased to allow me to assist Thee in the carrying of this cross." Our Lord turned His eyes on him, and with an indignant and severe countenance said: "How do you presume to take up this so heavy cross of Mine when you cannot endure to wear for My sake that habit that weighs so light?" Having said this, our Lord disappeared, and the novice awoke so ashamed and confounded by this reprehension, and so moved by the vision, that from thenceforward, much as he had been disgusted before, so much the greater was the joy and contentment which the patched and humble habit gave him.

CHAPTER V

Of the Great Mischief That Comes of Making Light of the Rules, Even though It Be in Small Things

H*E that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in the greater; and he that is unjust in a little thing, is unjust also in a greater* (Luke xvi. 10). On account of the great prevalence of this temptation, whereby the devil endeavors to make us careless in the observance of rules, saying that they are things trivial and of small importance and that our advancement in perfection does not depend thereon, we will set forth two considerations in this matter: first, the great mischief that comes of undervaluing these small things and not taking account of them; secondly, the great good that comes of the contrary. Christ our Redeemer tells us both the one and the other in the words above quoted.

On the first head He says that he who is bad and unfaith-

ful in what is little, will be the like in what is great. That is what the Holy Ghost had said before by the mouth of the Wise Man: *He that despiseth small things shall fall little by little* (Ecclus. xix. 1), even in what is great. This should be enough to make us very diligent and careful in the observance of rules, that we should not dare to fail in their observance under the idea that they are small things and unimportant; since we know on the word of God that he who despises such small things shall fall little by little, and not stop till he comes to great things.

In this way a city comes to be lost and captured by the enemy. The Prophet Jeremy says (Lam. ii. 8): *The Lord hath been minded to destroy Jerusalem*—that city so well fortified and girt around with towers, with wall and barbican—*He hath made his plans, he hath taken his measurements and hath not removed his hand until he hath accomplished his design*. But how did He do it? Would you know? Jeremy says that the barbican fell, and soon afterwards the wall also was breached and battered down, and so the city was entered and taken. In this way, then, our enemies enter and take the city of our soul. The rules, as we saw in the first chapter, are the outer wall or barbican which protects and defends the wall of the law of God. And if you allow this barbican to fall, in a short time the wall also will be destroyed, and your soul sacked and robbed—*He that breaketh through the hedge, the serpent shall bite him*, says the Wise Man (Ecclus. x. 8). If you, then, start tearing down this hedge of your rules, and destroying your palisade, the old serpent will enter through the gap and bite you. If you take away the hedge from the vineyard and do not trouble about what you have within, soon everyone will come and pluck the fruit. *Why hast thou broken down the hedge thereof, so that all they who pass by the way do pluck it?* (Psalm lxxix. 13).

That this point may be better understood, since it is of very great importance, I will put aside metaphors and fig-

ures and speak plainly. Do you wish to know how it is that the Holy Spirit tells us that he who despises little things shall little by little fail in great things? It is as theologians and saints tell us about venial sin, and we ourselves teach children in their catechism. Venial sin, they tell us, is a disposition towards mortal sin. No matter how many venial sins we may commit, it can never amount to a mortal sin, nor suffice to kill the soul or sever us from the grace and friendship of God. But they dispose the soul, debilitating, weakening, and unnerving it, so that it is easily overcome by any temptation or occasion which presents itself, and so comes to fall into mortal sin. It is the same with the first cannon shots which are fired against a wall; they do not demolish it, yet they shake and weaken it, so that subsequent discharges bring it to the ground. Or see the drops of water that fall upon a rock; although any one drop in itself is not enough to hollow it out and pierce it, yet it is enough so to dispose the rock that, in virtue of this predisposition, the following drops hollow it out and make a hole in it. *Waters wear away the stones; and the ground by little and little is washed away by freshets* (Job xiv. 19). So it is that venial sin disposes the soul for mortal sin. Little by little we lose the fear of sin, and begin to do that which is away from the love of God, and very soon this becomes something which is against Him. So it is that one who thinks nothing of telling a lie or swearing without necessity, will soon stumble and mix up the one with the other, swearing to something which is a lie, or at least doubtful, and there you see him fallen into mortal sin. He who has no remorse about detraction in small things will soon come across something not so trivial, and find himself in danger of mortal sin. He that is careless about glancing at unchaste objects and is negligent in driving away evil and impure thoughts that come to him is near a fall; for some day, when he is more than usually careless, his heart will get ahead of his eyes or thoughts, and in a

moment he will find himself fallen. Thus it is that the devil tries to dispose us to mortal sin by carelessness and venial sin. Thus it is that by breaking the rules and making small account of them we are disposed and carried on little by little to greater evil, until at last we fall into some grievous fault. At the beginning there is some remorse of conscience about breaking the smallest rule; then not so much, till finally we do it without the slightest remorse. In this way a religious becomes careless and tepid in prayer and examen and his other spiritual exercises, for those again are no more than a rule. Sometimes he omits one or other, at other times he makes them carelessly and merely mechanically, drawing no fruit from them. From these beginnings, which seem small, generally come the awful downfalls of a religious.

Thus it is that the saints understand those words of the Gospel concerning the murmuring of Judas, when Mary Magdalen anointed the feet of our Savior with the precious ointment. Judas said that it would be better to sell it and give the price to the poor. St. John, however, notes: *He said this, not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief and, having the purse, stole from the things that were put therein* (John xii. 6). As it would be his business to sell the ointment, since he held the office of steward, it hurt him that he had lost an occasion of filching "one in ten"; and to make up the loss he determined to sell Christ our Redeemer for thirty pieces of silver. St. Augustine says: "Notice that Judas was not lost when he betrayed Christ. No; his fall did not begin then, for the evil had settled on him long ago; already he was a thief and a lost man, for he followed Christ with his body only, and not with his heart." In like manner, when you see a religious fall into some grave sin, do not think that the mischief began then; he was a lost man before that. For a long time that man had been in religion in body only; he kept not up his spiritual duties, neither meditation nor exa-

men, and he thought nothing of breaking the rules. From these accumulations of dust came all the rest that ensued. St. Jerome observes the same: "That miserable man Judas thought to make up by selling his Master the damage he had sustained by the loss of the ointment." See to what a pitch of evil Judas was carried by covetousness and his beginning to steal things little by little, and his fondness for having something of his own, that we may fear to begin to fail, even though it be in small things.

This is what Job says: *Before the approach of the enemy cometh want* (Job xli. 13). First the soul is impoverished and weakened by the accumulation of imperfections and venial sins, by failure of prayer and spiritual exercises, and then it comes to fall into grievous and mortal sins. He that goes on quite recklessly gulping down imperfections will soon gulp down clear and manifest sins. Let us beware, then, how we give entrance to the devil by losing all fear of breaking the rules and esteeming them of small value.

Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem, says our Lord through the prophet, *lest my soul depart from thee and I lay thee waste and turn thee into a land uninhabited* (Jerem. vi. 8). Learn to conform yourself to that religious discipline and observance which your rules teach you; lest, perchance, God turn His face from you and abandon you and you come to a great crash.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Great Blessings That Follow Upon Observance of Rules, and Setting Much Store by Them, Even in Small Things

WELL done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy Lord (Matt. xxv. 23). In these words of Christ our Redeemer there are

well set before us the great blessings that follow from being careful in keeping the rules and setting great store by them, though it be in little and minute things. So passing great shall be the joy and reward that shall be given us for having been faithful and diligent in a small matter, that it is not said the joy shall enter into you, because you will not be able to contain it; but you are to enter into the joy, and it will be over your head, as when you enter a large room that is high over your head. And elsewhere He says that the measure of reward and glory that is to be given us for this shall not be scanty or cut down, but heaped up and overflowing. *Good measure, and pressed down, and overflowing, shall they give unto your bosom* (Luke vi. 38).

But let us see what can be the reason why the Lord rewards so highly those who are faithful in a little matter. The reason is because a man's fidelity is seen in these small things, and what he is likely to do when greater things are put into his hands. So says Our Lord Himself by St. Luke (xvi. 10): *He that is faithful in what is little will be faithful also in what is great*. It is to be observed that He does not say, he that is faithful in what is great will be faithful also in what is little, but the other way about, because fidelity is better seen in little things than in things of great importance. For example, the fidelity of a steward or accountant is not so much seen in the fact that he does not defraud his employer to the extent of a hundred or a thousand guineas, as that he does not even misappropriate one farthing. Likewise, the good servant is known not so much by his discharge of his main duties, as by his accomplishment of small and minute details of things which he was not obliged to do. Likewise the obedience and love of a son for his father is not seen in the fact that he obeys his father in matters of great importance, but that he will not displease his father by going against his will even in the slightest thing. In like manner, the good religious is not so much known by his not falling into grave

faults and mortal sins, as by his being careful and diligent in observing all the rules and in carrying out the least command of the superior. It is this that our Lord rewards and honors so highly, showering down great benefits and graces, because they are liberal with him. For, as St. James says: *Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you* (James iv. 8). Indeed, the closer you shall draw to God and the more liberal you shall show yourselves towards Him, by so much the more will He show Himself more liberal towards you, showering down greater graces and favors upon you. He that shall press forward with great diligence and care, striving to please God not merely in those things which are of obligation, but also in the counsels and works of supererogation; and not only in things which are of great importance, but also in the least, striving to do always that which seems to be most perfect and which he understands to be most in conformity with the will of God, he is truly liberal with God, and to such a one God will indeed be most liberal.

These are they that are privileged, that earn His blessing and special favors, that signalize themselves above others in virtue and perfection: so we see by experience. Some of these we have known, highly endowed with spiritual and divine gifts. Of others we have heard tell that, though they were of high seniority in religion, they made great account of observance and exactitude in every, even the least, rule and every prescription of obedience, however minute and small. They were an example, and put all to the blush; and it was by this way our Lord raised them up to such heights of perfection. Even in the world we see that those who serve their masters in this way, seeking to please them in all that they are able to do, in things both great and small, ordinary and extraordinary, these are they that gain the good will and favor of their masters. Now in the house of God it is exactly the same; for those who become like little children, who humble themselves, taking a real pride

in the observance of the most trifling things that make up religious life, God embraces, caresses, and shows them many favors. *Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. xix. 14). But as for those that esteem themselves greater than others, and go about seeking privileges; who, because of their seniority in religion, no longer make account of small things, thinking them only suited for novices, God will humble and cast them off, according to those words of the Royal Psalmist: *If I was not humble-minded, but lifted up my heart, then let that befall me in retribution which befalls a child new-weaned from its mother* (Psalm cxxx. 2). That is to say, if I shall rank myself with the great, may that happen to me, O Lord, which happens to the weaned child. A mother refuses her breast to the child that has grown into quite a big boy, but takes the little baby in her arms and suckles it. If, then, I will not humble myself and become like a little child, drive me away, O Lord, and let me not come near Thee, as the mother drives away and keeps from her the child that she has weaned. Mothers, when they are weaning a child, rub their breasts with aloes, so that where before the child found delight and sweetness, it now finds bitterness. This curse David invokes on himself, and it overtakes those who lift themselves up to be great folk and disdain to become like little children. Hence, where before they found joy and sweetness in prayer and other spiritual exercises, they now find bitterness, for everything is turned into aloes.

St. Jerome says: "He that desires to give himself in good earnest to God and greatly to please Him is careful over greater and over lesser things, knowing that for every idle word he shall have to give an account to God." He knows that from smaller, one falls little by little into greater, faults; and he is certain that, if he is faithful in small things, God will reward and recompense him by many favors. He, therefore, thinks nothing small, but sets great

value on everything. St. Basil, speaking of this, says: "Strive in such a way to set your eyes on greater virtues as not to lose sight of the lesser; and think no fault little, since there is no enemy that, if despised, may not be very hurtful to us and be able to do much harm"—*Studeto, ut maiorum virtutum compos efficiare neque minores tamen neglegito. Nullum omnino sit erratum, quod parvi pendas, quamvis illud tenuissima bestiola minutius sit.*

CHAPTER VII

What Has Been Said Is Confirmed by Some Examples

IN the Fourth Book of Kings, Holy Scripture gives the history of Naaman, a very rich and powerful man, in high favor with the King of Syria and general of his army, but covered with leprosy. He had heard tell that there was a prophet in Samaria named Eliseus, who tended and cured all diseases and raised the dead. He procured the favor of letters from the King of Syria to the King of Israel, to have him cured immediately upon his arrival. So he came with a great cavalcade of horses and chariots. On reaching the door of the Prophet Eliseus, his servants went in with the message. The prophet did not come out, but sent to say: "Tell him to go to the Jordan, and bathe there seven times, and he will be healed." Naaman was greatly angered at this answer. "*I thought,*" he said, "*that the prophet must have come out, and with great ceremonies must have invoked over me the name of his God, and must have touched with his hands the place of the leprosy and so healed me;* and now he comes out with this, that I am to go and bathe in the Jordan, as if we had not in our country better waters to bathe in. Let us be off, for it was not for this that we came here." And as he turned round to go back home, thinking that this was a matter of small importance, and that he should take no account of it, his servants,

who seem to have been very sensible people, said to him: "Sir, even though the prophet had prescribed a very great and difficult thing, you should have done it for your health; how much more now that he prescribes a thing so easy as going to that river, which is hard by, and bathing in it?" He fell in with this reasoning, and went there and bathed seven times in the Jordan, and came out healed of his leprosy, *his flesh becoming as clean and fresh as that of a little child* (IV Kings v. 14). It is to be observed how what seemed to him a trifle and a thing of little importance was the saving of him. The same happens in spiritual things. In these little and minute things that our rules tell us to do, lie our salvation, advancement, and perfection, as we see also that the perfection of a picture lies in very small touches and lines. Now, if to gain this spiritual health, this progress and perfection, we told you it was necessary to do very arduous and difficult things, you certainly should have done them, and thought it well worth your while; how much more when they tell you that you will gain it by doing such easy things as these? Thus the fact of the rules' being slight and minute things, far from being to us an occasion of neglecting them, should rather be taken as a ground of encouragement to keep them, seeing that on such small and easy things our progress and perfection depend.

It is related in the "Book of the Illustrious Men of the Cistercian Order" that those monks had a rule, at the end of a meal to gather the bread crumbs, and eat them or put them on a plate. It happened one day that one of those monks, a highly conscientious man and a great observer of the rules, had gathered the crumbs in his hand, and, being absorbed and taken up with the reading at table, kept them in his hand; meanwhile the prior gave the signal to stop the reading and rise from table. Then the monk bethought himself and was in a perplexity, for now there was no time to eat them nor to throw them on a plate. Much ashamed of the negligence that he had fallen into in not keeping the

rule, he found no way out of it but to go to the superior, tell his fault, and ask a penance for it. He kept the crumbs in his closed fist, and, when grace was over, he went and prostrated himself at the superior's feet, declared the fault that he had committed, and begged a penance for it with great humility. The prior gave him a rebuke proportionate to the fault, and asked him what he had done with the crumbs. He answered: "Father, I have them here in my hand." "Show them." He stretched out his arm, opened his fist, and instead of the crumbs they found most precious pearls. The author here observes that our Lord wished us to understand by this miracle how pleasing to Him are those fervent religious who make much account not only of important but of small and minute rules. Surius also relates this miracle in the Life of the holy Abbot Odo; and says that the thing happened to the abbot himself while he was still a subject, though out of humility he used to tell the story as a thing that happened to another religious.

Caesarius relates that in the time of the Emperor Frederick one of the imperial abbeys fell vacant, to which the emperor was accustomed to provide an abbot. Two of the monks had been elected to that dignity, and, as they could not come to an agreement, one of them offered the Emperor Frederick a large sum of money, which he had got together in the monastery, to choose him. The emperor took the money and gave his word to do so. But afterwards, being informed that the other competitor was a very worthy religious, discreet and virtuous and very observant of his rules, he took counsel with his advisers how he might contrive to choose the deserving candidate and leave the other in the lurch. One of his courtiers said to him: "Sire, I have heard tell that these monks have a rule for every one of them to carry a sewing-needle about with him; when, then, your highness is in their chapter room, ask that less observant one to lend you his needle, as though you wanted to clean

your fingernails; and if he has not got one, you will then have a good pretext for not giving him the abbey, as being a man who does not keep his rule." The emperor did so; and, as he had not got one, he asked his competitor: "Father, lend me your needle." He drew it out at once and presented it to him. Then the emperor said to him: "Father, you are a good monk and, as such, worthy of this high honor. I had resolved to choose your competitor, but he has shown himself unworthy of the post, since he does not keep his rule; and we may well understand that one who is neglectful and takes no account of small things will be still more neglectful of great." And on that score he deprived him of the abbey, and gave it to the monk who kept his rule.

The same Caesarius relates that a lady of high rank, wishing to leave the world and take the habit of religion in a monastery where the vicar was a monk named Florinus, on the day of her departure gave a banquet to her kinsmen and acquaintance, and with them invited the said vicar. To the seculars meat was served; but to the religious, fish, because according to his rule and the obedience that he owed to his abbot he could not eat meat. But he, seeing the meat, fixed his eyes on it, and under that craving of appetite gaily took a piece of roast meat from his neighbor's plate and put it in his mouth. But by a just judgment of God, the morsel stuck in his throat in such a way that he could neither swallow it down nor bring it up. When he was choking, and already his eyes were rolling in his head in the effort to get his breath, another religious, who was there as his companion, gave him a good slap on the back with such effect as to make him bring up the morsel. All took it that this had happened in punishment of his disobedience.

In the General History of St. Dominic, the Father Friar Hernando del Castillo relates that, while St. Dominic was living in Bologna, suddenly one night the devil began to

torment a lay brother with such cruelty that the noise of the blows awoke the other monks, who by the command of the saint took the afflicted brother to the church, but indeed scarcely were ten brothers able to carry him; and no sooner had he been carried through the doors, than with one puff he extinguished all the lamps, so that they were all left in darkness. The devil then continued in a thousand ways to molest the unfortunate brother. The saint then commanded the devil in the name of Jesus Christ to tell him why he was tormenting the brother and how he had taken possession of him. To which the demon replied that the evening before the monk had taken a drink without leave, or without making the sign of the cross over it, as was customary among the religious. While thus speaking, the bell began to ring for matins, and the demon said to them: "I can stay here no longer, now that these cowed gentry are rising to sing the praises of God;" and, so saying, he left the brother half dead, so beaten and bruised that it was two days before he could stand on his feet and use his limbs. St. Gregory tells a like story of a nun who ate a lettuce without making the sign of the cross over it, and the devil at once entered into her.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Some Other Things Which Cause Us to Fail in the Observance of the Rules, and of the Remedy for Them

SOMETIMES faults against the rules are wont to come from a certain shyness and pusillanimity, or rather, a lack of mortification, caused by the difficulty that one feels in going and asking leave of the superior for what cannot be done without leave; hence it will be necessary to remove this difficulty. I do not say that you should not drink, nor eat, nor speak, or that you should not take or receive that which another wishes to give you; but what I do say is, that all this should be done with permission. When you might

well do the thing with the blessing of God and of your superior, why do you wish to do it without? But you will say: "Have I to go so many times to the superior about each little childish thing? He is busy, and will be annoyed at it." This is a false impression which I wish to remove. Far from being annoyed at it, superiors on the contrary find this one of the things that most consoles and edifies them; it is their office. Your order sets such store by your being very obedient and doing nothing without leave—that being what makes for your spiritual progress and merit—that it thinks it well worth while to keep this and that and the other superior, whose office it is to give you leave for all that is necessary. Merchants and craftsmen are not apt to be annoyed at occasions arising for them to do a stroke of business; on the contrary, the more customers crowd to their shop, and the more buyers resort to them, the better they are pleased. So it is with good superiors; and for you to think the contrary of anyone is take him for no good superior. How can the superior be annoyed at your coming to him to ask leave for what he knows very well you cannot do without leave? Were you to come to him with some idle tale, or seeking exemptions, you would have reason to fear that he would be annoyed; but where there is an express rule for you to come, it is just the other way about. It gives him pleasure and satisfaction to see his subjects such exact observers of rule, so accurate in their obedience and so particular about small things. On the other hand, superiors are grieved and greatly pained when subjects do not resort to them. Their view in such a case is that you want to get back your liberty and act on your own account, daring to do things without permission, as though there were no superior in the house for you to go to and no rule about the matter. The superior, like a good father, grieves at that; and, desirous as he is of your good, your bad behavior pains him. It is over this that we should make a difficulty, and be careful not to displease superiors herein.

It follows also from what we have said that no one ought to be shy about going to the superior to ask leave for what he knows the rule forbids him to do without leave. Much less should we be shy about telling our brother that we have not leave for what he knows there is a rule about and we are not allowed to do without leave. This is a point of great importance, since some are apt to break rules to escape the mortification of saying: "I have no leave to speak, or to receive what you offer." These people sometimes excuse themselves by saying that they pass it over in order not to mortify the other person; so they do not trouble to say that they cannot do the thing. This is judging your neighbor to be a poor religious and a poor observer of rules. You should take it that he will not be mortified, but edified, at seeing you so observant. Perchance he took this occasion to try you, to see whether you kept the rules. Pride yourself on being a religious, since such you are, and a great observer of rules; no one can take that amiss, but rather should take it very well.

Others excuse themselves by saying: "I do it not to appear scrupulous." This again is a very bad excuse, since to appear a keeper of one's rules is not to appear scrupulous, but religious. He would be in very evil plight who was ashamed to appear a religious, a servant of God, and a great observer of his rules. This is one of the abuses that there are in the world, that, when anyone makes a point of virtue, of frequenting the sacraments, and keeping himself somewhat recollected, people at once murmur and make game of him; and on this account many do not dare to give themselves openly to virtue, as Holy Scripture says of that leading man who came to Christ our Redeemer by night because he did not dare to go in the daytime (John iii. 2). But in religion it is the other way about, and so we should endeavor to keep it always. Among other great advantages that we religious enjoy this is one, that we are in the company of people who are all striving to be more

virtuous and more religious, and he who goes furthest in this effort is the most esteemed. A good religious should be so well grounded and so strong in the love of God and of virtue that, though he meet with some contradiction therein, he does not on that account give up doing the good and the better thing, nor blushes to appear a religious and a servant of God. Whoever is ashamed to do this has reason to fear lest the Son of God also be ashamed to uphold and acknowledge him for His servant in presence of His Father, as He says in the Gospel. *Whoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him the Son of man shall also be ashamed when he cometh in his glory and that of the Father and of the holy angels* (Luke ix. 26). If a gentleman took a servant to accompany him and do him honor, and that servant were so proud and ill-behaved that, when he went with his master, he stayed on purpose a good way behind, not to appear to be his servant, clearly he would deserve to be dismissed and cast out of his master's household. He, then, has reason to fear the same chastisement, who is ashamed to show himself as the servant of God and observer of his rules.

That we may be the better disabused in this matter, it is well to persuade ourselves that not only those of our own community, but externs also, are greatly edified at our being very exact in the observance of our rules. For example, we are with visitors when the bell rings calling us to some duty, and we say to them: "Sir, we are now called off to this;" and so civilly break off the interview, and go to fulfil our obedience. We know well that some seculars have been edified, and have got more good out of this interruption than they could possibly have got from anything that we could have said to them had we stayed in their company; and the more ancient in religion and the more gifted the person who behaves thus, the greater the edification. Thus great punctuality and exactness in the observance of the rules, and saying that leave must be asked for what the

other knows that we cannot do without leave, is not narrow-mindedness nor want of courtesy, even though the person spoken to be a father of ancient standing. Nor is it scrupulosity; it is simply being a good religious, careful to improve: so it cannot offend, but must greatly edify all. If such behavior were a singularity and an extraordinary thing to do, there might, I dare say, be some color of reasonableness in the excuse: "I don't want to appear singular; I am afraid they may think it a piece of priggishness;" but it is not priggishness, it is keeping your rule. Besides, in this way once for all you shut the door to similar importunities, which is a great relief; whereas, if you leave it open, you give occasion for their plying you with the like another time. And besides the good and advantage that you hereby gain for yourself, you confer a great benefit on your brother, who perhaps did not think of the rule; and now by your example he does think of it, and sees the importance of it. You could not have given him a better reminder.

In the chronicles of the Order of St. Jerome there is mention of a religious who was conspicuous in his observance of silence, and on that account was held by all in great reverence. A knight of high standing heard of his fame, and went to the monastery with a desire to speak to him. Seeing him going alone to his little garden, he began going after him, calling him to speak with him, but the servant of God did not stop to wait for him who was calling him, nor answered him a word. Thus going after him, they both entered the garden; and, on entering, the holy man prostrated himself on the ground and, closing his eyes with his hand, said to him who wanted to talk to him: "Perhaps, sir, you do not know that I cannot speak without leave of my prior." Having said these words, he once more prostrated himself on the ground, and said not a word more. The knight, seeing this, had no mind to importune him further; but, so the story goes, returned to his house more edified at

his observance of silence than if he had spoken a thousand words.

Of another holy man of the same order it is related in the same chronicle that among many other virtues he had this, that he spoke little, especially in times of silence and in forbidden places, such as the cloister and the church; and not only was he careful not to speak in the places aforesaid, but he would not answer another who spoke to him there. It happened one day that the King Don Henry came to the monastery, and, walking round, chanced in passing through the cloister to see this religious going that way. He called him to speak to him, because he loved him much for the holiness of his life; but he did not care to stop and answer. The king, seeing that he did not answer, began to raise his voice and go after him, calling to him. But the servant of God never stopped, nor answered a word until he got out of the cloister. When they were both out of it, the king asked him why he had not answered before. He then gave him the reason, saying: "In the cloister, where your highness called me, it behooves not us religious to speak, and that is why I did not answer till I got out of it." At this answer, the story says, the king was greatly edified.

CHAPTER IX

Of Other Means to Help Us in Keeping the Rules

BESIDES what has been said, we shall be greatly helped to be diligent and careful in the observance of our rules, first by the consideration of the good example and edification that we are bound to give, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Paul: *Careful to do good not only before God, but also before all men* (Rom. xii. 17; II Cor. viii. 21). It is not enough for us to be good ourselves; we must shed light on the world by our life and example. *So let your*

light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. v. 16). In such sort we must shine before men that they, seeing our life so exemplary, may praise and glorify our Father Who is in heaven, as men are wont to praise God when they see a tree flourishing and laden with fruit, or a very beautiful and sweet-smelling rose. We are bound to give this good example to all the world, and hold up to them the light of our good life; but this should be done especially to our brethren with whom we live and converse. Now this good example and edification does not consist in your not committing grave faults, but in your avoidance of small ones. Let all see that I am very exact in obedience and the observance of rules, and that I set a value on small and minute points of religious observance and make much account of them. He gives the best example and edification who is very remarkable and distinguished in this; and the older you are in religion and the most advanced in learning, the more edifying it is to see you careful and diligent in small matters. This ought to be the mark of seniority, and in this it should be seen who is of longest standing, in his being the most humble, the most mortified, the most exact, in the observance of rules and all points of obedience, however small they be. Such is the teaching of Christ our Redeemer and Master in the Gospel: *Whoever is greater among you, let him be the least, and let him who is head become as him who serveth* (Luke xxii. 26). These are they who by their good example uphold a religious order, and promote virtue and religious discipline; these are the pillars who keep the house standing. *I will make him as a pillar in the temple of my God*, says God in the Apocalypse (iii. 12). *I have set thee as a pillar of iron and as a wall of brass*, He said to Jeremy (i. 18).

On the other hand, you cannot do more harm in religion than by giving bad example in it; and the older and more gifted you are, the more harm you will do, because exam-

ple is the most effectual of forces to move and carry others away, as the saints and experience show us; and example is far more potent for evil than for good. If your neighbor sees you, the senior man, practise the rules in this fashion, and make small account of little things, what is he to do, considering the natural inclination that we all have to liberty and laxity, and our repugnance and aversion for walking by rule and under control? When he sees the way well trodden, and the postern gate open, what else is he to do but walk through? That is what he was looking for, and was only waiting for someone to show him the way and rid him of his bashfulness. That is the way religious discipline comes to be relaxed, and you to be the cause and origin of the relaxation. You will have an account to render to God, not only of your own faults, but of the faults of others, since you were the cause of them by your bad example, according to the saying of the prophet: *From mine hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord, and from the sins of others spare thy servant* (Psalm xviii. 13). This should help us to be very observant of our rules, and not do anything that might give disedification.

The second means to secure the observance of the rules to be in full vigor is a very familiar and easy means, and our Father lays it down in his Constitutions and Rules, where he says: "Sometimes every year let all ask the superior to give them a penance for neglect of observance of the rules, that this may be an indication of the care they have of their spiritual advancement in God's service." We should have such a high idea of the rules that, every time we fail in their observance, we should not only repent inwardly of the transgression, but show our repentance externally by asking and doing some penance for it. In this way, though one fails sometimes in keeping the rules, that infraction is made whole and atoned for by the penance, and the rules remain in their integrity, vigor, and observance, as though they had never been broken. Doctors of

law and theologians also say that the law then remains in its force and vigor, *in viridi observantia*—green, fresh, and entire observance, as though it had just been made—when whoever breaks it is punished. For the law to be in full force and observance, it is not necessary that it should never be broken by its subjects; it is enough that account be taken of such infraction, and the offender be chastised and punished. But when the law is broken out and out, and no one is punished or checked for that, then they say it is a sign that that law is not in observance, nor has the force of law, being derogated from and abrogated *per non usum*, by disuse and practice to the contrary. We may say the same of our rules. When in an order there is such care taken that, no sooner is the fault committed and the rule broken, than penance comes atop of it, then the observance of rules flourishes. But when on the one side rules are broken and many offenses committed against them, and on the other we see that no penances are asked or performed on that score, then we may well say with truth that the rules are not kept, since now they are broken so freely and so recklessly that nobody minds, no punishment is inflicted, and no account taken. Tomorrow you will say that this observance no longer has the force of a rule, since contrary usage has abolished it, and under the eyes and with the knowledge of superiors the rule is broken, and no penance done for it. Hence it is that superiors, who are bound to see to it that the rules remain in force and are observed, and watch as sentries and guards over the order, are obliged to give penances for breaches of observance. When the superior gives you a penance and a scolding, it is not because he has any spite against you, or because he esteems you less. He knows that we are men, and that there is nothing to be surprised at in a rule's being let slip here and there; he does it to fulfil his duty, which obliges him to stand up for the rules. If when they are broken, he were to pass the matter over and take no notice of what he sees

going on, nor give any penance, that would be showing that he sets no store by rules and has no objection to their being broken; thus little by little the use and practice of them falls into neglect, and religious discipline is weakened and relaxed. It is this, says St. Bonaventure, that makes the difference between orders observant and reformed, and lax orders—not that in the latter wrong things are done, and in the former not; that is impossible, for *we all offend in many things* (James iii. 2); but that in observant and reformed orders he who breaks the rule is rebuked and punished, and not in the others.

Now in what the superior does under the obligation that he has by virtue of the office that he holds, our Father wishes all to help him to do it. So he says sometimes in the year to give them penances for their failure to observe the rules. It would be putting the superior to too much trouble to expect him to act the constable on duty over every individual, giving him a penance for every rule he broke. That would be impossible; and even if it could be done, it would not be in accordance with the gentle system of government usual in the Society. It is you that should take upon yourself this care, and be the first to tell your fault to the superior and ask for penance. You should not let your superior come to know your fault for the first time by the report of another about you; this is your affair, and you have more to gain by it than anyone. And the reason should be much considered which our Father assigns in the same rule: "That hereby may be shown the care which each one has of advancing in the service of God." Thus a man's being careful, when he fails in a rule, to go and ask a penance for it, shows that he is careful of his spiritual advancement; while one who breaks rules and commits many faults against them, and never takes the trouble to ask a penance for it, shows that he has little care of his advancement. When this practice prevails in a house, and there are many penances and mor-

tifications, we may say that the house is going on very well in great fervor, and all are greatly edified and animated to good thereby.

This, then, is the second means, which we give now, and it is very easy. I do not say that we should commit no faults against the rules. For that, it would be needful that we should be no longer men, but angels; we shall often fail in them, and who is there, however just he be, who escapes venial faults and sins? *There is no man that sinneth not* (III Kings viii. 46). When, then, you fail, show some sense of what you have done; let it be seen that you are a religious, that you value and appreciate the rules and have a habitual desire to keep them. Let them see you at once telling your fault, for by this trifling penance that you do you repair the breakage of the rule. You even gain more than you have lost; and the devil shall have no cause to plume himself on the fault he has made you commit, but shall be angry and confounded at the ample satisfaction that you have made for it. So the devil himself confessed to St. Dominic much against his will, when the saint took him through all the rooms of the monastery, and made him tell him how he tempted his religious in each. Coming to the chapter room, which is the place where they tell their faults and receive rebukes and penances, "Here," said the devil, "I lose all I gain in the parlor, in the refectory, and in all other places." And not only before God, but also before men, atonement is made and the breakage of the rule repaired by these penances. Have you neglected to ring the bell, or to answer punctually some call of obedience? Have you committed a public fault which all have seen? By a public penance that breakage will be repaired, by your at least telling your fault. But if they see the fault, and see no penance done for it, they may reasonably say that in this house no account is taken of exact observance, but that things are done in a free and easy style.

But it must be observed here that, though it is true that

it is more usual in the Society to ask for penances than to give them, and so it is right that it always should be; yet it would not be well for the second manner of doing penance, which the rule mentions, to be forgotten, which is "when the superior obliges you to them for the same end." From forgetfulness of that, penances given by the superior would be rendered difficult, and some would come to resent inordinately having such penances given them. That would be notably prejudicial to religious discipline, and cause great disedification. So we must not give entrance to this abuse in any way; but let the usage of penances' being given by the superior go on, and be practised generally upon all, for there is always room for it. And even were there not, our Father says that all should be ready to accept and accomplish with a good will all penances imposed upon them, even though given without any fault for which they were to blame. Hereby a better display is made of virtue and humility and desire of improvement, according to the saying of the Apostle St. Peter: *What thanks are due to you for suffering chastisement when you sin? But when in doing right you suffer it patiently, that is pleasing in the eyes of God* (I Pet. ii. 20). Many thanks, or few thanks rather, are yours, when you commit a fault and, there being good reason to blame you, you then take rebuke and penance patiently. But when you have done nothing to deserve it, and still they rebuke you and give you a penance as though you were in fault, and you take it patiently and in an edifying way, that is a thing of high estimation.

That will also be a help to keeping the rules which the last rule of the Summary and the last of the Common Rules prescribe, namely, to know them and understand them. So it is ordered that all should take and read them, or hear them read, every month. Some are not content with hearing the rules read in the refectory, but along with the spiritual reading that they practise they read three or four rules every day, and so go through them all every

month leisurely and with reflection. This is a good practice, and makes good spiritual reading. It will also be a great help to make the particular examen on the observance of rules, not taking them all together but each taking that rule on which he finds himself most apt to fail, and after that, another, and at other times on the rules of his office, and it will be a very profitable examen.

▣ TWENTY-THIRD TREATISE ▣

ON THE MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIENCE



The reader's attention is called to the new Code of Canon Law, Canon 30, which affects this Treatise considerably.

CHAPTER I

How Important and Necessary It Is to Deal Openly with Our Superiors

CASSIAN tells of the ancient Fathers that to newcomers, who entered among them to serve God, they proposed it as the first letter of the A B C's, that all their temptations and evil thoughts, and all that passed in their soul, they should lay bare at once to their elders and masters, and this ranked as a first principle among them. The blessed St. Anthony used to say: "So far as is possible, a religious should not take a step, or turn from side to side, without giving an account thereof to the superior, even to the extent of declaring how many cups of water he drinks a day, that all may be reduced to the level of obedience." St. John Climacus says that he found in a monastery of great holiness many monks who carried a little book hanging from their girdle, in which they wrote every day all their thoughts to give an account of them to their pastor, and he says that such was the command of their superior. The same instruction is set down expressly by Saints Basil, Jerome, Ambrose, and Bernard.

This, then, which was the common teaching of the saints, and a first principle among those ancient Fathers, is enjoined upon us by our Father, as a thing most important and necessary, in very grave words, which are found in his Constitutions. "Having thought and considered and commended the matter earnestly to God, it has seemed to us, in reverent waiting upon His Divine Majesty, highly proper for subjects to make themselves entirely known to their superiors." Our Father is not wont to speak in this manner of other things, even though they be of great importance; and not content with this manner of speaking, he sets to work to prove it by very efficacious reasons.

The first reason for this importance and necessity of

openness with superiors is that so they may be better able to govern and direct their subjects. The superior is bound to guide and direct them; that is his office, that is the meaning of being Rector or superior. But if he does not know you, and you do not declare yourself to him, it is plain that he cannot do so. *He that hideth his crimes, shall not be set right*, says the Wise Man (Prov. xxviii. 13). If the sick man does not discover to the physician his ailment, the physician cannot cure him; for as St. Jerome says: "Medicine cures not what it knows not"—*Quod ignorat medicina non sanat*. You needs must declare your infirmity to the physician if you want him to cure you. And if you have many weaknesses and infirmities, you must declare them all. If you hide any, it may be that he will give you a remedy that will do more harm to the ailment that you have said nothing about than good to the ailment that you have declared. What is good for the liver, is bad for the spleen. So you must needs declare everything, that he may so temper the medicine in one respect as not to do harm in the other. In the same manner and for the same reason you must declare to the spiritual physician, that is, to the superior, all your ailments and weaknesses. When the physician knows his patient well, knows all his weak points and understands well his constitution, then he has gone a long way toward curing him. He lights at once on the radical cause of the illness, diagnoses the peccant humor, can tell what may do the patient good or harm, and so easily applies the proper remedy. For this reason princes and great lords carry physicians in their train, who go with them and stand by at their meals; not that the physician is to keep saying to them every moment: "Don't eat that," "Don't drink so much," for that would be to worry them and make himself a nuisance; but that, seeing them eat and seeing their exercises and what they like most, and what usually does them harm or good, their medical adviser may thoroughly understand their constitution, and when they do get ill, may know

how to treat them and apply remedies to better effect. This, then, is the comfort which our Father wishes us to have, physicians ever at our side, well acquainted with our constitution and inclinations, our weakness or strength, that so they may better know how to treat and govern us. The government of the Society is spiritual and interior. It does not take the road of punishment, and therefore it does not ordinarily proceed by the juridical method of informations and denunciations; its sole aim is the due treatment and improvement of your soul. To that end it is necessary that you should manifest and discover yourself to your superior as to a physician and father holding the place of God. If you do not do that, it will be putting yourself in danger and tempting God, Whose purpose it is to rule and govern you through men; and they cannot well govern you if you do not declare yourself to them, since they do not know you.

The second reason, which is an enlargement of the preceding, is this, that the more superiors are conversant with all the facts, interior and exterior, regarding their subjects, with so much the greater care and love will they be able to help their souls, and keep them out of sundry untoward situations and dangers into which they might fall by their being appointed to this or that post or put in this or that occasion of sin, all through their superior's not knowing their temptations and evil inclinations, and their small and insufficient stock of virtue. In the Society especially we must be ever ready, according to our profession and institute, to range about different quarters of the world every time we receive orders to that effect from the sovereign pontiff or our immediate superior. And that such missions may be ordered on a sure footing, sending some and not others, sending some on one errand and others on another, our Father says: "It is not only very, but extremely, important" for the superior to have entire knowledge of the inclinations and temptations of his subjects and of the defects and sins to which they are most inclined, that there-

by he may better guide and direct them, not putting on anyone a burden beyond his strength, nor exposing them to greater dangers and hardships than what they are severally able well to bear." One of the things that renders the government of the Society easy, sweet, and well assured, is this openness on the part of subjects and the knowledge that superiors have of each individual, his talents, parts, and capacities for good and evil, what he is made for and for what not, since in this way they know what to make of everyone and what they can put him to. Thus they will not order you anything beyond your spiritual or corporal strength, nor put you in danger, but dispose of everyone according to his strength and talents—to *everyone according to his proper ability*, as the Gospel says (Matt. xxv. 15).

Thirdly, says our Father, this is very important as a means to enable the superior better to order and promote what is fitting for the whole body of the Society, to the good and honor of which, along with yours, he is bound to look. When you manifest yourself to him and give him an entire account of your soul, then the superior, while having entire regard to your honor and without inflicting any stigma upon you, may at the same time look to the general good of the whole body of the Society. But if you do not declare yourself clearly to him, possibly you may endanger your honor and your soul, as well as the honor of your order, which depends on yours.

By the way, it will be well for us to consider and reflect upon the means which the Society affords us for our own improvement, how excellently well they fit in with the end of the Society. If by our institute we were shut up in our cells, going only to choir and refectory, there would be no need for such openness with superiors, nor for so many accounts of conscience. But in the Society, where subjects are and have to be thrown into such strange situations, and so much confidence has to be reposed in them, sending them

throughout the world among believers and unbelievers, and sometimes alone, and that for a considerable time, the superior needs to know well each man's interior, that he may not endanger him and the Society in his person. And for the individual himself it is of much importance to make a clean breast of everything to his superior for the discharge and security of his conscience, otherwise all these dangers will come upon him; whereas, if he will but declare to the superior his weakness and the smallness of his spiritual strength, they will not expose him to these dangerous occasions.

Plutarch alleges a similitude which well illustrates this. The poor who wish to appear rich impoverish themselves the more and in the end come to ruin, wanting to appear richer, wishing as rich men to spend more than their purses will allow. In the same way if a religious is poor in virtue, but for want of humility is anxious to disguise his poverty and appear rich and fraught with what he has not, he will impoverish himself the more and possibly will end in ruin, because they will deal with him as with one rich and advanced in the virtue and put him in dangerous occasions which he has not the funds nor the virtue to meet; all this will come upon him because he has not declared himself. Thus, though it were only for our own satisfaction and security and the freedom of our own conscience, and the avoidance of scruples, and a happy deliverance from dangers coming upon us—as also to have God more bound to us, to help us and bring us safe out of those dangerous occasions—we should give this clear account of our conscience to our superior. Oh, the content and satisfaction that a religious enjoys who has been thoroughly open with his superior, and manifested all his miseries and imperfections, when afterwards they send him on a mission or put him in office! Oh, the confidence he has in God, that He will stand by him and deliver him from shame in the dangerous occasions that he meets withal! “Lord, I did not

put myself in this office, nor in this post; rather I exposed my insufficiency and the little spiritual strength I had to qualify me for it. It is Thou, O Lord, Who hast put me here and commanded me; do Thou supply what is wanting to me." With what confidence does he repeat the saying of St. Augustine: "Lord, give me what Thou commandest, and command what Thou pleasest"—*Da quod iubes, et iube quod vis!* It seems to him as though he had God thereby pledged to give him what He commands.

But as for that other man, who has not given a clear account of himself, but for fear lest they might put him in this place or move him from that other place which he likes, has failed to manifest some temptation, or passion, or imperfection, or weakness of his, what comfort can he find? God has not sent him to that station, nor has obedience put him there, for ignorance, as philosophers say, causes involuntariness. It is not the will of the superior, but he of his own self-will intrudes and pushes himself into office; he is an intruder, not one called or sent. Of such that may well be said which God says by Jeremy (xxiii. 21): *I did not send them, they thrust themselves in: I never spoke to them, and they gave themselves out for prophets.* With such persons as these, is it wonderful that much is wanting to them and that they do not succeed well? They have reason to fear and lead unhappy lives. Let such folk take good notice that they will not satisfy their conscience by begging the superior not to put them in such an occupation or occasion because they do not feel the virtue or strength required for it, but the reason why must be declared more in particular, as we shall say afterwards; as for all the rest, the superior puts it down to humility, and the greatest saints are wont to speak in that strain.

For these reasons, then, our Father so much commends this practice to us, and speaks of it again and again in his Constitutions, as of a thing that has a great bearing on the welfare of the whole Society. So full is our Father of

this sentiment that in the Fourth Part of the Constitutions, dealing with the injunction that no one is to keep anything, door or box, locked, he adds "nor his own conscience either," though this remark does not seem to be to the purpose there; such is the deep feeling of regard that he has of it. And he does the same in the Sixth Part, where he says: "Let them hide nothing from the superior either of their outward action or their inward thought." He takes this to be so necessary in the Society that at all times, *in season and out of season*, as the Apostle says (II Tim. iv. 2), he seems to remind us of it.

In the Fifth General Congregation, the question being raised: "What are the substantial points of our institute?" it was said that they are those which are set forth in the formula or rule of our institute given by Julius III and approved and confirmed by his successors, as also all those provisions without which the former could not stand, or could only hardly stand, and one of these they said is that of rendering an account of conscience. Thus it is a substantial point, so much so that without it the Society could not be maintained; in saying this we say all that can be said. Even in other religious orders this practice has been observed; and some historians have remarked that so long as there existed in them this holy custom of having recourse with all their troubles to their superiors and spiritual fathers, and discovering their whole soul to them, they persevered in great fervor. And, contrariwise, experience shows that this is apt to be the common way whereby a religious comes to ruin and fall from his vocation. He begins little by little to allow tepidity and passion and evil inclination to arise, and to fail in his spiritual duties, and to fall into one fault after another. Meanwhile he takes care to cover up his imperfection, and give no account of his infirmity; and in this way he goes on inflaming his wound and making it a running sore. So what was a little thing becomes great, and in the end almost incurable,

till his whole spiritual edifice comes crashing down because there was much silent decay going on in it without any remedy's being applied. St. Dorotheus notes this well in these words: "Some say that this or that was the reason why this man fell, and this other left religion. Sickness, they say, threw him out, or his parents induced him to leave the order; but I say, neither this nor that was the cause, but it was because he had barred his breast from the beginning, and would not give an account of the things that were happening in his soul."

CHAPTER II

What a Great Relief and Consolation It Is for a Man to Be Open with His Superior and Spiritual Father, and the Blessings and Benefits That Ensue Therefrom

THE saints and doctors of the Church, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and Bernard, say that one of the greatest comforts that a man can have in this life is to have a faithful friend whom he can lean upon, discovering to him all his heart and its secrets, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *A faithful friend is a medicine for life* (Ecclus. vi. 16). There is no medicine so effectual for the cure of wounds, says St. Augustine, as a friend who can comfort you in your afflictions, counsel you in your doubts, rejoice with you in your adversities. *He who hath found such a friend hath found a treasure.* Treasure, do I say? *There is nothing to be compared to a faithful friend* (Ecclus. vi. 14-15). All the silver and gold that the Indies yield, and all the world rejoices in, is not worth so much as such a friend. Now this is the blessing that the Lord has given us in the Society, that you have such a friend, you must understand, in your superior, who is your spiritual father, your master, your physician, your mother and brother, and has more than a mother's feelings for you, and will take

your interests for his own and more than his own. Know, then, how to profit by such a friend, and open your heart to him with great confidence. If you find such a friend, says the Wise Man, have recourse to him; *let thy foot wear out the steps of his door* (Ecclus. vi. 36); frequent his room, consulting him and imparting all your concerns to him, since in him you will find comfort, counsel, and remedy for all your needs. As to the sick man it is a relief and comfort to declare himself to the doctor who is to attend him, so to the man in affliction and distress it is a great relief and comfort to declare and manifest his pains and afflictions to one who can console and aid him.

One of the means that philosophers prescribe for casting out sadness and relieving the afflicted heart, is to relate and declare one's troubles to another. St. Thomas mentions it, treating of sadness, and gives this reason for it. When a person chooses to endure his troubles all by himself alone, they draw his attention and thoughts more to them, and so afflict him more; but when they are imparted to another, the sufferer is somewhat diverted therefrom because his attention is distracted and his heart dilated and relieved. So we see by experience, and it is a common saying among men: "Pardon me, sir, because it is a relief to me to recount my troubles." The holy Abbot Nilus, a disciple of St. John Chrysostom, says that this was a common means prescribed by the holy Fathers for this purpose. They illustrated it by a good comparison. Have you not seen how dark and gloomy the clouds look when they are charged with a quantity of water, but, as they proceed to discharge it and get relieved of their burden, they become bright and resplendent? Thus, while a man is burdened and shut up with his temptations, he lives in great sadness and perplexity, very heavy and melancholy; but when he casts off from himself this burden by discovering and manifesting himself to the superior, his heart is relieved, his sadness assuaged, he is cheered up and comforted, and

straightway he comes to enjoy great peace and satisfaction of heart.

St. Dorotheus relates of himself that he felt so peaceful and happy upon discovering and manifesting all his doings to his master and spiritual father, that he became afraid and had his suspicions as to whether he was going on well, and felt indignation against himself, saying that afflictions are foretold as the lot of such as are on the way to heaven: *for by many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God* (Acts xiv. 20). And when he saw that he felt no affliction, but great satisfaction and comfort, these fears came over him as to whether he was on the right road to heaven. This went on until his master, the Abbot John, told him not to trouble about that, for this peace and contentment which he felt was promised to those who opened their conscience as he did. And let it be observed that this openness must be not only in the matter of temptations and imperfections, but also in things that of themselves are good and quite spiritual, as we shall presently explain and have already said before.

On account of the great importance of this practice our Father enjoins it so earnestly, and would have superiors talk and converse frequently with their subjects; as well for other advantages that there are in their doing so, as also because by this private and familiar intercourse subjects are greatly encouraged to have recourse to their superiors and explain themselves clearly to them. And for the more abundant help and great consolation of all, he orders in his Constitutions that there be in every house and college a prefect of spiritual things, to whom all can have recourse to gain relief and consolation by talking to him, and to be directed and aided in the affairs of their souls.

Cassian says very well of all human methods and all mechanical arts, which serve for temporal advantages only, that, though they be material and can be seen with the eyes and felt with the hands, nevertheless they cannot be

learned or well known unless one serves an apprenticeship and puts oneself under a master who can teach them. What sensible man, then, can think that for this science of your spiritual advancement alone you need have no master to teach you and tell you how to behave, it being a matter so hidden and spiritual and invisible that not only the eyes of the body cannot see it, but not those of the soul either, except where there is great purity of heart. And this is not like other sciences, where a mistake involves temporal loss, which can easily be repaired; there is question here of the losing or saving of the soul forever. We are not fighting here against visible enemies, but against invisible; and not against one or two, but against countless troops of devils, making war upon us night and day. It is necessary, therefore, says Cassian, to have very diligent recourse to our elders and spiritual fathers, declaring to them all that passes in our soul, to be directed and helped by them.

Apart from other reasons, the great fruit and profit that ensues from having in every house a prefect of spiritual things and having recourse to him is clearly seen from the things that are treated of and laid before him, which are to give an account of how one gets on at meditation, what method one follows therein, what fruit one gathers, whether one observes the additions and recommendations that we have for making it, what is the subject of our particular examen and whether we mark it and compare results, whether we make spiritual reading and how we profit by it, whether we have any temptations and how we behave under them, what penances and mortifications we practise, as well private as public, how we are in the matter of obedience, of indifference, in humility, in observance of rules, and other like things. Now whoever knows that he has to give an account of all that, evidently will be helped to take a little more care, to be able to give a better account. Moreover, there is no doubt but that to see that much importance is attached to a thing, and great account taken of it,

is a great means to make us also regard it and attach importance to it. Seeing that they ask me these things again and again clearly obliges me to take more care of them; and if I fail once, to take care not to fail a second time.

As theologians and saints say, sacramental confession is a great bridle to restrain men from sin. So it was shown by the experience of the heretics in Germany who had denied and abandoned it. Things went so far that they found their towns full of vices and deeds of violence. No man was sure of his neighbor; and these very heretics sent a petition to the Emperor Charles V, begging him to make a law ordering all to go to confession, seeing that, since confession had been abolished, they could not live or get on with one another. Thereat the emperor laughed not a little, as if it had been in his power to make a law to that effect. Now, as it goes a long way to restrain a man from committing sin, to know that he has to confess it, so it also greatly restrains a man from committing faults and imperfections, to see that he has to give an account of them. And to push the comparison further, frequent confession is one of the chief means that we can give to a person for his salvation; for besides the grace and forgiveness of sins that is given in that sacrament, there are therein contained all the remedies and counsels that can possibly be given. Thus, when we wish anyone there in the world to make great progress, we give him some advice: at one time, to recite the rosary; at another, to hear Mass daily if he can; at another, to hear sermons; at another, to make examen of conscience; at another, to do some penances, and never to let a day pass without doing some penance; but finally, to put the seal on all, we give him for a remedy, to confess frequently to a good confessor; and therein we think we are giving him all remedies in one, and saying all that can be said and all that need be said. For if he does that, the confessor will give him every week or every fortnight

or every month the means and remedies that you cannot give, nor he take all at once. The confessor will ask him an account of how he puts into execution the counsels that have been given him. This is what good confessors should do; they should take care that their penitents go on always advancing in virtue. To this end masters of spiritual life advise penitents that everyone should have a fixed confessor; for to confess today to one and tomorrow to another is a likely way of making little progress, since no one takes such a casual comer expressly under his charge or regards him as any son of his. In the same way, in this practice of giving an account of conscience there are included all the particular means and remedies that can be given to anyone for his spiritual progress: for hereby the superior or spiritual father sees what profit you are making out of meditation, examens, and spiritual reading; hereby he sees how you are overcoming temptations and inclinations and the infirmity of nature; hereby he sees how you are in point of silence, humility, indifference, and resignation, and whether you are advancing or falling away; hereby there is given you the particular remedy and advice that you have need of according to your necessity and disposition, correcting you on one point, encouraging you on another. And this being done with the gentleness and charity with which it ought to be done, and by the bounty of the Lord is done in the Society, so that you understand that the only object desired and aimed at is your greater good and spiritual improvement, this means cannot fail of being of great effect and efficacy.

CHAPTER III

That to Discover Temptations to the Superior or Spiritual Father Is a Very Efficacious Means to Take against Them

IT is the common doctrine of the saints and a first principle with those ancient Fathers, as we have said, that all temptations should be discovered and manifested straightway to our elders and masters, and our Father admonishes us of this in the Constitutions. But let us see what is the reason of this strong recommendation, for that will be very useful to the purpose of imprinting this truth on our hearts. The reason of it, says Cassian, is that in this way the devil will not be able to deceive you by his artifices and temptations, as he might deceive a newcomer, since you bear arms put in your hands by your veteran teacher. He will not deceive you, as he might an ignorant and inexperienced person, if you have recourse at once to your spiritual father, a learned and experienced man, and let yourself be guided by what he tells you. Then the devil has not to fight with a new soldier and raw recruit, but with a veteran well versed in this spiritual warfare. All the science and all the experience of your confessor and director you make yours when you open yourself at once to him and are guided by what he tells you.

In this way, Cassian says, there is gained true prudence and discretion, a virtue so great and so much praised by the blessed St. Anthony. Those holy monks once met in collation and spiritual conference, and began to confer and discuss among themselves what virtue was most helpful to perfection. One said it was chastity because thereby a man keeps sensuality subject to reason; another said it was abstinence, whereby a man is master of himself; another that it was justice, and so each one said what he thought. St. Anthony, having heard them all and made up his mind

what to hold, said: "The virtue most necessary, and most helpful for perfection, is prudence and discretion; since no exercises of virtue, unless they are done with that, are pleasing to God, or are acts of virtue at all." Then you ask, says Cassian, what is the easiest and shortest way to attain this virtue. Set down and communicate all your doings to the superior and be guided by his word and counsel, and in this way you will attain it, and make the prudence and discretion of the superior your own. St. Bernard says the same, speaking of this virtue: "Since the virtue of discretion is a very rare thing—*rara avis in terris*—contrive to supply the lack of it by the virtue of obedience, so as to do nothing, either more or less, or in any other way, than as obedience shall prescribe." In this way, he says, the lack of discretion and experience is made up and remedied, and true prudence is gained.

For this reason the saints so strongly recommend us to reveal our temptations straightway, and for the same reason the devil uses the utmost diligence in trying to get us not to reveal them, for he has another end in view to the contrary, which is our ruin and damnation. St. Dorotheus says that there is nothing that gives the devil so much pleasure as to find a man who will not disclose his temptations and thoughts to his superior; such a one he reckons that he is sure to overcome, because the man fights against him single-handed. *Woe to him that is alone* (Eccles. iv. 10), because he has none to help him against a fall or to lend him a hand to rise again. Contrariwise, there is nothing that the devil more dreads or that puts him out more than to be discovered, for with that he loses all hope of victory, is disheartened, and takes to flight.

Our Father well illustrates this in the Book of the Exercises by a comparison, which, as he alleges it, we may well allege. He says that our enemy the devil, in tempting us, takes the same line as a man with a wicked passion does in making his advances to solicit a young girl of honorable

parentage, or the wife of a good husband who is jealous of her honor. In seeking to ensnare her, the first thing that he does is very diligently to try to keep the thing secret; and there is nothing he resents or dreads so much as the girl going to tell her father what is going on, or the wife her husband, because upon that he at once gives himself up to despair and loses all hope of gaining his end; but so long as it is kept secret, he has some hope of success. In the same way, says our Father, when the devil is seeking to ensnare a soul, his first object is with all diligence to secure that the matter be kept secret, and that the temptations and reasons alleged in their support be revealed to none, because, once that is assured, he feels certain of victory and the attainment of his purpose. And on the other hand there is nothing that he resents so much as his intended victim's going and disclosing and manifesting these proceedings to his confessor or superior. As the devil has more power and more success by strategem than by force, when he sees himself discovered, he gives himself up for beaten, and all his frauds and entanglements are confounded. Such is the way with all deceivers, as the Gospel text has it. *He that worketh evil, hateth the light* (John iii. 20).

St. Dorotheus relates to this effect what befell St. Macarius. He says that the great Macarius, a disciple of St. Anthony, one day met the devil, and asked him how he was getting on with his monks. "Very badly," he replied, "because no sooner does a thought come into their minds than off they go and discover it to their superior. But," he added, "there is one who is a great friend of mine. I hold him in my hand, and do with him what I like, and spin him round and round like a top;" and he mentioned his name. On hearing this, St. Macarius went to see that monk, and found that he was making this mistake, that he never related his temptations to his spiritual father, nor got guidance from him. The saint exhorted him to unbosom

himself, and henceforth never to trust any more in his own judgment. The advice was well taken, and so the evil was remedied. St. Macarius caught sight of the devil again another time, and asked him how things were going with his friend the monk. The devil answered in a great rage: "He is no more my friend, but my enemy." St. Dorotheus here remarks very well that all St. Macarius' monks were tempted by the devil, but the others he could not overcome, on account of their at once giving a clear account to their spiritual father of all that passed in their soul, and being guided by him. This one alone was overcome and led astray by the devil, who trusted in his own judgment and guided himself by his own lights, refusing to declare and manifest himself to his superior and spiritual father. And he was also cured as soon as he manifested himself. Cassian says that he cannot be deceived who manifests and declares himself entirely to his spiritual father, and quotes in confirmation what the Holy Ghost says by the Wise Man: *If thou discoverest and layest bare his disguises and artifices, that is, his secret and hidden temptations, he shall not deceive thee, nor carry thee away* (Ecclus. xxvii. 19). *God deliver thee from the serpent that biteth secretly* (x. 11). When the serpent or viper plays the rattlesnake, and comes hissing and making a noise, and the snake charmer hears him, there is a remedy. In the same way God keeps you from the devil, the old serpent, who bites when he is alone in silence; but when your spiritual director hears him, who can charm him with verses of Holy Writ, there is a remedy at hand.

A further point to note in this matter is the high value that God sets on the humility that is shown in having recourse to the superior or spiritual father, and opening your heart to him. So pleasing is this humility to God that often the temptation is put an end to by the mere revealing of it, without observing the remedy, and even though the superior does not mention any remedy and makes

no reply. So says Cassian: "The temptation lasts no longer than while it is kept covered up in the heart; uncover and reveal it, and at once it disappears; even before the superior has given his answer, it is already gone; as the snake lurking in a dark hole or under a stone makes off at once when it is discovered." Lift up a stone, and you will see how the toads, adders, and lizards that were there make off and cannot suffer the light; so the devil, the old serpent, says Cassian, makes off at once when he is discovered, because he is the father of darkness and cannot endure the light. The devil, being so proud, greatly resents the discovery of his petty and base arts; he is too proud to stand it, and so flies away at once when he sees himself discovered.

Let us set ourselves here to consider and reflect if for bodily ailments there were physicians who could cure them by merely having them made known to them, what a boon we should take that to be. But what in the treatment of bodies is impossible, is witnessed by daily experience in the life of the soul; by the mere declaration of temptations to the superior, they are often gone before he has given any answer. Even further, I say, by the mere resolve to tell the thing to the superior or spiritual father, the temptation often comes to an end and vanishes. You were going to tell it him; and before you reached his door, God had scattered all that cloud, and delivered you from the temptation and trouble that was on you. We have an example of this in the Lives of the Fathers of Egypt. They tell of one who had fasted sixty weeks and prayed continually that God would declare to him the solution of a certain doubt he had; and as all that time he could not come by it, he resolved to go to another monk, who dwelt in the same desert, and lay it before him; and as he went out of his cell for that purpose, he found on the spot an angel, who gave him the solution of his doubt, telling him at the same time that by that act of humility he had merited to have his doubt cleared up more than by all the praying and fasting that he had

done. In the holy Gospel we have also a good example of this in the ten lepers that came to meet Christ our Redeemer on His way to Jerusalem, crying out: *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us* (Luke xvii. 13). He bade them go and show themselves to the priests. And the holy Gospel says: *While they were on the way*, before they arrived there, *they were cured*. God takes such satisfaction in our humbling ourselves, and subjecting ourselves to the men whom He has put in His place, that He will confirm it by miracles to show how pleased He is. Often by merely threatening the devil to discover him, he takes fright, and leaves you and makes off. So it is a good thing here to do what children do, who, when anyone annoys them, threaten that they will tell their father.

CHAPTER IV

That No One Ought to Omit Telling His Temptations to His Spiritual Father on the Plea That He Already Knows the Means to Be Taken to Meet Them

ONE may say: "I have already many times heard of the means to meet temptations, and from what I have seen and read in spiritual books I know what answer the superior or spiritual father can give me; why should I have recourse to him?" We have good reason to fear lest this temptation may come upon us here, all the more in the case where a man thinks that he is already well advanced in this science. St. Dorotheus was much harassed with this temptation, but he knew well how to deal with it. He relates how, when he was going to manifest his temptation to his superior, the thought at once occurred to him: "Why throw away time to no purpose? He can only answer you this or that. You know it already; it is not worth while going to trouble the superior." And I, he says, waxed indignant at the temptation and at the uprising of my own

judgment and opinion, and I said: "Avaunt thee, Satan, excommunication, anathema, and curses be upon thee!" So I took no notice of the temptation, but went to my superior and told him all that was going on; and when the superior happened to give me the answer that had occurred to myself, and a sudden disturbing thought came over me: "Did I not tell you that such would be his answer, and that there was no need of going to him?" to that I answered to the contrary: "Now it is a good remedy, now it is of the Holy Ghost; when it came from you, it was suspect, and I could not feel sure of it." In this way St. Dorotheus rejected the temptation and never gave it entrance, but carried the whole matter to his superior. So we should act, giving no credit to our own judgment, and not trusting it; for it is the common opinion of wise and holy men that no man is a judge in his own cause. And if that is true where there is no question of temptations, how much more where there is? For temptations blind the eyes of the soul and hinder her from seeing the right thing, according to that saying of the prophet: *My sins have overtaken me, and the light is gone out from mine eyes* (Psalm xxxix. 13). In such a moment the man does not know the remedy that suits him; and if he knows it speculatively, he does not succeed in making a good use of it or putting it in practice, because he is dazed and troubled by the temptation and passion; and God will help him more by one word of the superior than by all the knowledge that he possesses.

St. Augustine tells a witty story which is pat to our purpose. He says that a certain sick man called in the doctor, who saw him and applied a remedy by which he at once got better. It happened, some days after, that the same attack came back upon him; and as the remedy that he had applied on the former occasion had succeeded so well, he took no thought of the doctor, but took the same remedy, which he remembered right well; but though he took it, he felt none the better for it. He wondered at that, and sent to

call in the doctor, and told him what had happened, and asked him why it was that, having taken the same medicine, he felt none the better for it. The doctor gave him this witty and acute answer: "Sir, the reason why this medicine has done you no good this time, is because I did not give it you myself." Now, we may apply the same saying to our purpose. This remedy that you know and have heard of many times, will do you no good because your superior or confessor has not given it you, he being your spiritual physician. Medicine has quite a different force and efficacy when it is given by the hand of the physician, who knows the exact situation and circumstances; so it is also with spiritual medicines and remedies. Good were the waters of the rivers of Damascus, and better than those of Jordan; but they did not avail to drive away Naaman's leprosy, but only those in which the Prophet Eliseus had bidden him wash (IV Kings v. 10). God co-operates with the words which the superior says to you, and with the means that he prescribes, because he is in His place; so an easy and common remedy, given by the hand of the superior, will do you more good than all you know, although you know much more than he.

CHAPTER V

That None Should Omit Manifesting Things because They Look Trifling

THERE is another ground which the devil is wont to allege, to hinder some people from having recourse to their superior, which is telling them that there is nothing in it, and that there is no need for having recourse to the superior about childish trifles, and that you should be ashamed to go to him over such a little bit of a thing as that. To this I say, in the first place, that anyone aiming at perfection should not wait for a thing to be grave, or

a matter of necessity and obligation, but should always strive after that which is better and more perfect; so of anything, however small it be, he should take account and report it to the superior, for that is the meaning of aiming at perfection. Now, one of the things that gives great edification is having recourse to the superior on very minute grounds; and the more ancient and learned a man is, the greater the edification, because this is making oneself a child and a little one for Christ.

In the second place, I say that sometimes the thing is not so small as one thinks. It is the shame and repugnance that you feel to mention it that cause you to go in quest of reasons to make light of it, and persuade yourself that it is of no consequence, that so you may not tell it. So it often happens in confession, when one is ashamed to tell a piece of vulgarity and a mere nothing. At once the devil comes in, availing himself of this natural shame and repugnance that you feel, and persuading you that this is no sin, or at least, no mortal sin, and that you are not bound to confess it. Oh, how many has the devil deceived in this way, and made them omit to confess necessary matter, and so come to make bad confessions and Communions! The mere feeling of repugnance and difficulty in disclosing and manifesting a thing to the superior ought to be enough to arouse your suspicions, and make you understand that it is proper to tell it. So Cassian says that this is one of the clearest signs by which you can understand that a thing is bad and a temptation of the devil; and he adds that this was the common opinion of the Fathers. When evil is done we at once seek to cover it up. When one is anxious to cloak a thing over, there is grievous suspicion of the business' not being good. *He that doth evil escheweth the light* (John iii. 26).

In the third place, I say that, though the matter be trifling at present, yet a little thing, by being covered up, is apt to become great. So it is well to declare it while it is a lit-

tle thing, that it may be remedied in time, the remedy then being easy, while afterwards it is apt to become difficult. St. John Climacus says that, as birds' eggs, if covered and warmed under the wings of the mother or under dung, little by little are hatched and come to receive life and produce other birds, so do evil thoughts, when they are hidden in the heart, unrevealed to anyone who can cure them, come to the light and are put in execution.

There is another idea also which the devil is apt to put before some minds, to keep them from having recourse to the superior. It is the idea that they will be burdensome and tire him out with these things; and so, not to be tiresome and burdensome, they omit having recourse to him. This is a great mistake; for this is the office of the superior, and one of the main things that he has to do is this. Thus you do great wrong to your superior in judging that he is bored and annoyed over having to do a thing which is so essential and necessary a part of his office. Rather he rejoices greatly in being occupied with a thing so essential as this, on which the spiritual advancement of his subjects so greatly depends, as we have said above in a similar case.

Cassian tells a story of what happened to Abbot Serapion when he was a youth, and the abbot used often afterwards to relate it to his religious, to encourage them to give an account of all their affairs to the superior. When I was a novice, he said, I was much tempted to gluttony. I seemed never to get enough; and when I had dined with the Abbot Thomas, who was my superior, every day when we arose from table I secreted in the fold of my garment a little loaf, which I ate afterwards in the evening without his knowing. Thus overcome by gluttony, I committed that theft and act of self-indulgence every day; and though, when I had done eating, I was always seized with remorse, so great that the torment and pain of it was considerably greater than the pleasure I had got by eating, nevertheless, he said, the temptation had got such a hold on me that I did the same

over again the next day, and stole another little loaf, and ate it secretly, and did not dare to tell this temptation to the superior. This went on till the Lord in His mercy was pleased to deliver me from the servitude and captivity in which I was in the following manner. Some monks happened to come to visit the holy Abbot Thomas, and after dinner they began talking of spiritual things, as their custom was. It happened that the old man, in answer to their inquiries, spoke of the vice of gluttony and of the force that temptations had when they were kept secret. And as I was suffering from great remorse of conscience, I thought that all this was said for my benefit, and that God must have revealed my temptation and fault to the holy abbot. So, struck with terror at the force of his words, I began first of all to weep secretly with myself; then, as the feeling of compunction grew, I could not contain myself any longer, but broke out into loud bursts of weeping and sobbing, and there before the whole company I drew out from my bosom the little loaf that I had stolen and hidden that very day; and, prostrate on the ground, I asked pardon and penance, and publicly declared my temptation and how, overcome by it, I had done that every day. Then the holy old man began to console and encourage me, saying: "Have great confidence, my son, that thy confession, and this so heroic act that thou hast done in manifesting and declaring here publicly before all thy temptation and fault, has delivered thee from this captivity and slavery. Today thou hast overcome the devil, and gained a decisive victory over him who had been victorious over thee. Understand that the Lord permitted thee to be so far captured and subjected by this temptation because thou didst hide it; and hold for certain, now that thou hast manifested it, that the devil will no longer lord it over thee, but that old serpent will be gone at once, being unable to bear the light." Hardly had the holy abbot done saying these words, when there came out, he said, from my bosom something like a flash of light-

ning or a lighted torch, which filled the whole cell with so abominable and hellish a stench that hardly anyone could stay there. Then the holy old man returned to his subject and said: "Thou seest here, my son, how the Lord has been pleased to show by deed what I have said to thee in word. With thine own eyes thou hast seen the devil come out and fly from thee by virtue of thy confession, since he could not brook the light and the showing up of his intricate and mischievous lies. So have no fear of his daring to attack thee again." And so it was, for from that hour I have never again had that temptation, nor has anything of it ever recurred to my memory.

CHAPTER VI

Some First Answers to the Difficulties That Usually Hinder This Openness in Manifestation

WE have spoken of the importance and necessity of dealing openly with superiors. But the more important a thing is, and the more necessary, and the higher the perfection that it involves, the greater the repugnance apt to arise in our nature, set all awry as that nature is by sin. And the devil, envious of our good, is wont to come in, making difficulties out to be greater than they are, to stop our way. It will be well, then, to satisfy these difficulties. It will be not a little but a great thing done, if in a matter so main and necessary as this we succeed in smoothing the way. Though we are here addressing religious, every Christian may apply the doctrine to himself, since it is a thing that concerns all. So Gerson here addresses all generally, speaking of confession, as we shall presently see.

In the first place, since naturally we like to avoid trouble and difficulty, and what we are now speaking of is apt to present itself to us as a difficult and troublesome business,

we will begin with that, showing and proving that a man will suffer incomparably more trouble in keeping his secrets under lock and cover than by discovering and declaring them to the superior. And let this point be noted, because it is a thing that tells strongly against lovers of themselves, who leave undone the works of virtue and perfection on account of the difficulty and trouble they feel in them. I confess that there is some trouble and mortification in discovering to the superior all one's temptations, inclinations, and defects; but I say that a man will carry about him a much greater load of trouble and pain by covering and cloaking these things over than he would have in discovering and manifesting them. Experience shows us this well, and anyone can bear good witness to it whose policy at any time has been to be close and reticent with his superior. Oh, what anxieties, what sudden thrills of remorse, does he suffer whose habit it is to cover and cloak things over! He is ever in the pangs of childbirth, thinking whether he shall speak out or be silent. Now he has a mind to speak, and then he veers round and changes his purpose. Now he gets as far as the superior's door to tell him, and then he turns on his heel, not daring to tell him. *The iniquity of Ephraim is tied up in a sack, his sin is hidden away, the pains of one in childbirth shall come upon him* (Osee xiii. 12). He was on the point of exposing to the light the temptation and evil thought that the devil, father of darkness, had put into his breast, and he had not virtue or strength enough to do it. *The children have come to the point of birth, and there is not strength to bring them forth* (Isaias xxxvii. 3). He remains always in labor; and the longer he delays the discovery, the greater the pains he feels, because he has made it matter of greater difficulty and shame to tell it after all. Now it comes to pain him that he did not reveal it at the beginning, and the greatest difficulty he feels is in this reflection: "How can I go to the superior now after the lapse of so much time? If the thing

were just starting, I would tell him; but now with what face can I appear before him? After I have kept myself close from him for so long a time, what will he say? He will say that I had no confidence in him, since I would not tell him of it at the beginning." A man will know no rest or repose so long as he keeps his secret thought barred and covered up. Conscience will be ever tormenting him with remorse and beating him, because he will not do a duty of the first importance; whereas on but discovering and declaring himself, all this tempest will be appeased at once, and he will find himself very peaceful and comfortable.

When one dares not confess a sin for shame, his life is one of perpetual fears and fits of grave uneasiness; but on confessing it he feels as happy and as much relieved as though he had thrown off a great tower that he was carrying on his back. Festering wounds, says St. Gregory, while they are closed, notoriously give greater pain, the purulent matter burning there within; but when they are opened, all that filthy accumulation oozes out, and naturally the pain is appeased. So it is when one confesses his sins and declares his temptations and weaknesses. The confession and manifestation of faults and temptations is like lancing an inflamed wound; or as when the stomach is charged with bad humors or excess of food, and the man goes retching and hiccuping to throw it up, and finds no quiet or repose until he succeeds in throwing it up, but is at once quiet and at ease when he does throw it up. Hence it will clearly be seen how much greater is the pain and torment of keeping one's secret thoughts close and covered up than would be felt in discovering and manifesting them, for all that is involved in doing that is a little shame and mortification that passes away in the time that you could recite a *Credo*, and leaves behind much peace and satisfaction at having made the disclosure. Thus to one who, to escape difficulty and trouble, will not declare himself, we may well reply that just for that very reason he should declare him-

self. His closeness will bring him in more trouble; he will rot away, gnawed and consumed with pain, whereas in speaking out he will find much peace and tranquillity.

CHAPTER VII

Meeting the Main Difficulty That Is Apt to Stand in the Way of Openness in Manifestation

ONE of the greatest, or the greatest, difficulty that is apt to occur to some in the way of their declaring and discovering their heart to their superior is the thought that they will be dishonored, and lose the good name and credit that possibly they enjoyed with him, and that henceforth he will look upon them with other eyes, and will not trust them nor show them so much love. By this thought the devil deceives many, and makes them not open themselves or not open themselves entirely. Now, if we can show that all this is the other way about, and so much the other way about that by discovering and manifesting oneself one rather gains honor and esteem and more love, and by not declaring themselves people lose all this, I think that this difficulty will be quite smoothed over. So, then, by the grace of the Lord we will show here the truth, and let it be seen that things are just the reverse of what the devil represents them to be to deceive us, according to his ordinary procedure in all temptations, for he is the father of lies.

I say, then, that there is nothing that makes one lose reputation and esteem with a superior more than shrouding oneself up and being shy with him. It gives the superior occasion to begin to take him for a close man and a dissembler. No fault that he could ever reveal of himself could do him so much harm as that, for one fault is one fault, but to take anyone for a close man includes a good deal, since it puts him under suspicion of many faults.

"That is a close man; he never opens his heart. How do I know but that, as he has kept this thing up his sleeve, he will keep another and another thing concealed?" This mere suspicion goes for more than one can say. On the other hand, when a man opens out his whole soul to his superior and declares to him all his temptations, inclinations, and defects, he not only loses nothing, but gains much credit with him, for he takes him for a humble and mortified man, plain and straightforward, in whom there is nothing else within but what he shows without.

We will go on with this topic further down to the root of the matter, for it is one of the principal things to be said on this subject. I say, first of all, that a man cannot take a more effectual means to be cherished and loved by his superior, and gain his good will, than to manifest and discover his whole heart to him without hiding anything. The reason of this is that, as philosophers and saints commonly say, one of the most powerful motives for loving is being loved. The Evangelist St. John brings forward this motive to invite us to love God, *that he hath loved us first* (I John iv. 10). But one of the chief things by which a subject can show that he has a great love for his superior is by discovering his whole heart to him, and all his secrets, great and small. Where the love of two persons goes so far as that, that there is nothing hidden between them, there is there a very great and very close friendship. So said Christ our Redeemer to His disciples: *I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have heard from my Father I have made known unto you* (John xv. 15). To others I have spoken in parables, but *to you I have given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God* (Luke viii. 10). When, then, a superior sees that someone reveals to him his whole heart, and that nothing is left there untold, he then understands that that person has a true love for him, and takes him for his father, holding the place of God, since he confides his soul and honor to him, and puts everything into

his hands. This wins his heart, and obliges him to love that person more and look better after him. But if the superior sees that his subject does not declare himself fully, but speaks with reserve and beats about the bush, dealing in parables that he may not understand the matter as it is, that is sufficient cause for his forming no high opinion of him, and loving him less, because he sees that the other does not love him, nor esteem him, nor take him for a father, nor confide in him, nor dare to reveal himself to him; this naturally causes a coolness in love. How can you expect the superior to love you as a son, if you do not love him as a father? Love him as a father, trust him, deal openly and plainly with him, and he will love you as a son.

The same thing we shall say afterwards, speaking of the relations of superiors to subjects. When the superior speaks to the subject clearly on any point, and says to him: "See, you have this or that fault; there is a hitch there and people complain of you; try to correct yourself on it," that is the procedure of true love. But when the superior uses roundabout phrases, and does not fully tell his subject of his faults, or of the points on which he would wish him to amend, but puts an outward complexion on the matter different from what he thinks within, he speaks not the language of true love, but of dissimulation and pretense. So I say that, when the thing is carried on with this openness and plainness on both sides, then there will be true love of superiors for subjects and of subjects for superiors, and true union of hearts, and we shall get on well; but when otherwise, all will be formality and fiction. Thus the revealing and declaring of oneself to the superior does not destroy love, but increases it.

Hence it follows in the second place that neither will one lose thereby the good name and opinion that the superior had of him; for where there is love, there is always esteem, the will loving only that which the understanding repre-

sents to it as good and worthy of being loved. Thus these two things, love and esteem, ordinarily go together. But apart from that, coming down more to particulars, it is clear in the first place that nothing is lost by the mere fact of a man's having temptations, however evil and foul soever. Rather it is a mark of them that serve God and aim at spirituality; whereas other people often do not know what temptation is like, nor recognize temptations when they come, nor need the devil waste his time over them, because of their own will, without solicitation of his, they follow his ways. It is against those that betake themselves to the service of God and aim at virtue and perfection that the war of temptation is generally declared, according to that saying of the Wise Man: *Son, betaking thyself to the service of God, prepare thy soul for temptation* (Ecclus. ii. 1). Some people have the idea that temptation is a very shameful thing, a thing quite singular and extraordinary, and that nobody ever had the like; and so they dare not declare it, fearing that it will quite startle the superior. But this is a temptation proper to novices, who, having no experience, have no knowledge of temptations, and take that for a new thing which is very old and common. Hold for certain that you will say nothing to the superior or confessor that will be new to him, however extraordinary it may appear to you. Many others have met with that temptation; possibly he himself may have passed through it. *Nothing is new under the sun*, says the Wise Man (Eccles. i. 10). All things are old, though to you they seem new.

Nor again will one lose credit with the superior for revealing to him his faults and imperfections—for that is a consideration that is apt to make this manifestation difficult. The reason is because it is in human nature to fall, for, after all, we are creatures of clay, which is easily broken, and the superior knows well by himself the weakness of his subject, since we are all one same lump; so he is not shocked when people discover to him their faults

and imperfections. Gerson, by way of persuading persons of tender age not to omit to confess anything for shame, which is wont to be a very ordinary fault in such little folk, says: "Think you that I shall cherish you less, or make less account of you, for knowing your sins and weaknesses? You are mistaken; nay, I shall thenceforward love you more, as a very dear son, and one who has had confidence in me and disclosed to me what he would not dare disclose to his own father. God knows the tender affection which I feel for one who lays bare to me his miseries; and the more low and shameful they are, the more do they soften my feelings, and make my heart go out towards him." That humility and plain speaking with which he declares his fault, that desire which he shows of better things and of his being cured and finding remedy, naturally moves the superior and makes him deal with him affectionately, and love him. Even when a stranger comes to us and tells us of his troubles and miseries, we receive him with love and a great desire to help him, and try to comfort and encourage him; what, then, must it be with a son? It is very important for all to understand and be persuaded of this truth, that in discovering their imperfections and weaknesses to their spiritual father they shall lose nothing, but rather gain more love and consideration, that so none may omit a duty of such importance as this for the representations that the devil makes to the contrary, false and lying as they are.

For the greater confirmation of this it is to be observed that, while doing evil and having a will and purpose to do it is a shameful thing and unworthy of appearing before God and before men, abhorrence of the evil done, and repentance and shame for having done it, and bemoaning and confessing one's errors and sins, is not a shameful thing, but a thing highly honorable before God, and so it should be also before men who are in the place of God. Theologians, then, raise a question, whether at the day of judg-

ment the sins that the saints and blessed have committed are also to be exposed to public view. Opinions differ, but one thing we may say in this matter for certain, and it makes for our purpose. It is that, if those sins are made public, it will not be to the confusion and shame of them that have committed them, but to their honor and praise; for along with the sin there shall come into view such penance and satisfaction as they have done for it, so that they shall not be confounded and ashamed, but rather honored and thought well of. God is quite able to effect this, and we see that He does it here on earth in the case of many saints. Magdalen's sins are exposed to all eyes and published every day; and on her feast day they are chanted in the Gospel to her great honor and renown, and for the honor and glory of God, Who even out of sins is able to draw so much good. And the same we see in the sins of the Apostles, St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Matthew, and those of the Prophet David. Thus, by those sins which have been followed by repentance and satisfaction, honor and esteem are not lost, but rather gained.

There is a good similitude often used to explain this. Someone gets a new silk gown; it is well made and looks very well. It catches somewhere and tears; now it looks as though it were spoiled. He puts over the rent a ribbon, or some trimmings of gold, or a very rich piece of embroidery, and the gown turns out very graceful and goodly to see, so that it looks as though that tear had been done on purpose to increase its beauty. So shall the sins of the saints and blessed, if they are to be made manifest, be exposed to all eyes at the day of the last judgment. They shall be to them no cause of confusion and shame, but rather of glory and honor, for their having got out of them as they have. They have put a band of gold and rich embroidery over the rent, whereby they shall be the more honored and adorned. In this way, then, here in religion, when one makes known to confessor or superior his weak-

nesses and miseries, in a spirit of shame and repentance and a true desire of finding his cure and remedy, not only does he not lose credit with the superior, but rather gains increase of honor and respect and love. The Wise Man says: *There is a confusion that carries with it sin, and another confusion that carries grace and glory* (Ecclus. iv. 25). The confusion and shame with which one manifests his faults, that it is which carries with it honor and glory; but the confusion and shame that makes one hide his faults carries with it sin.

It is recounted of our blessed Father Ignatius that, to win back a priest and religious from a very dissolute and profane life, a life wholly contrary to his profession, after having tried other means to win him without success, he adopted the expedient of going to confession to him. After mentioning his everyday faults, he said he would like also to accuse himself of sundry sins of his past life that pricked his conscience most; so he began to confess the weaknesses of his youth, and ignorances of his past life, with such great sentiment of sorrow and so many tears that the confessor came to change places with him in such sort that he began to love and reverence him whom he had formerly abhorred; took him for his director and guide, and made the Spiritual Exercises which our Father gave him. There followed a great change of his life, to the notable edification of all who had known him before. Hence it will be seen how far a man is from losing hereby honor and reputation. That whereby one comes to figure better in the eyes of God and gain more favor with Him, cannot be a loss to him, but rather a gain, in the eyes of men who are God's ministers and have to make His ways their ways.

Hence may be inferred a truth, well borne out by experience and worthy of consideration, which is this, that, when a man is close and dark and will not go on to declare himself, it is a sign that he has no mind to mend his ways, nor is bent on that, but means to go on anyhow in his

faults, and has no desire to get out of them. For if he had true sorrow and repentance for his faults, and a firm purpose of being henceforth all that he ought to be, it is plain to see that he would not lose with his superior by declaring his fault, along with his repentance and purpose of amendment, but rather would gain. This is a thing whereby they lose much who will not go the length of declaring themselves.

CHAPTER VIII

Another Way of Meeting the Aforesaid Difficulty

WE might also answer this difficulty in another way, which is this. If we were thoroughly humble, or desired and aimed at being so, we ought to rejoice at the superior's knowing us and taking us for what we are; and to that end alone we should manifest to him all our evil inclinations and defects; for it is not right that I should be regarded otherwise than for what I am. True humility not only makes a man know himself and have a poor opinion of himself, but makes him also rejoice at other people's knowing him and having a poor opinion of him. It is for other reasons, as we have said, that this clear account to be given of conscience is ordained in religion; but though there were no other good in it than this, that should be sufficient for us if we had a true desire of humility, for this is a great exercise of the same. But if this humility is wanting, if we desire to be regarded and highly thought of, if we desire office and high and honorable posts, it is not surprising that there should come over us a vain fear, which is wont to frighten, or rather to delude, persons of that sort. "If my faults come to the knowledge of my superior, I shall be always shoved away into a corner and forgotten." Saints and servants of God, we see, feign faults and even sins, not to be taken up and promoted to dignities

and honorable posts, but to be left alone in their corner. But he who for a contrary motive makes it his policy to throw a veil over the real faults that he has, that men may esteem and promote him and reckon him for more than he is worth, shows himself very far from virtue.

Here there is a very chief point to be observed, which we have touched upon also elsewhere, which is that one of the chiefest things in which a religious should exercise and show humility and mortification and other virtues, is in the case of such virtue being necessary for the accurate observance of his rules, since therein consists our advancement and perfection. If he has not virtue enough to exercise and put in practice the details of humility and mortification to which his rule and institute oblige him, it may be reckoned that he has none at all. What is the good of virtue and mortification if, when it comes to a case of a natural bashfulness or the loss of a little credit, a main rule like this is to be set aside? If you had true humility and self-knowledge and sorrow for your faults, this shame and confusion that is felt in declaring it should be taken cheerfully in atonement and satisfaction for the fault, and that alone should be enough to make you have recourse to the superior. Such was the behavior of the Emperor Theodosius, an example well worthy of being copied. When Rufinus told him not to go to church because St. Ambrose was bent on barring his entrance, the emperor said in a true spirit of Christian humility: "I am minded to go to church, and hear from the bishop what I deserve." So you should say: "I am minded to go to my superior, I am minded to go to my confessor, and hear of him what I deserve, to know myself and reckon myself for what I am, and to receive from the Lord this shame and humiliation in satisfaction and atonement for my sins." This is genuine humility and compunction, and a good sign of repentance; a sign that one does not feel, as possibly one might feel, more shame at discovering oneself to a man than at having offended

God. Very far is such a one from true humility. If we are to desire, as our rule says, to suffer injuries and false witnesses and be accounted fools, without our giving occasion for the same, how much more should we desire it for doing an act of virtue, obedience, and religion, and keeping a rule so important as this!

But that we may not seem to wish to carry everything by the way of the spirit only, let us take another way to smooth and further facilitate this business, the way that we mentioned in the last chapter, which is also a good and true way. I mean that not only does a man lose no credit with the superior by discovering and manifesting himself, but rather he gains with him honor and esteem and increase of love; while he loses all that by not declaring himself. To which I add another thing, which follows from the above, that, where this open dealing exists, the superior in that case puts much trust in such a person, and with reason, for he knows and understands what there is in him, and is satisfied that he will have recourse to him for anything that turns up; but when a subject does not altogether show his hand, a thing that readily lets itself be understood, the superior then cannot trust him, because he does not know him and is not aware of what there is in him, and so is forced to be cautious, looking at what he is about and keeping an eye on him.

And this should be well observed, because it is one of the chief sources whence spring much discontent and bitterness among subjects, which unpleasantness would be stopped and brought to an end if people would be open with the superior. It is a very common experience that by this mutual dealing and intercourse irritation is removed, and the apprehensions and imaginations dispelled which superiors had of inferiors, and inferiors also sometimes have of superiors. These suspicions and fears are generally like the phantoms of the night, which horrify and frighten afar off, and if you go up to them and touch them, you will find

that they are a branch of a tree which you took for a thing of the next world. So it happens here. Things that upset and frightened you, and seemed to be something considerable, by touching them, handling them, dealing with them, vanish into thin air, and you find them to be nothing at all. Seneca said very well, speaking of the brave and undaunted spirit in which we should face things, that there are things which our failing to face is not because they are difficult in themselves, but they are difficult because we fail to face them—*Non quia difficilia sunt, non audemus; sed quia non audemus, difficilia sunt*. If we would set ourselves to it, and pluck up heart to face them, we should see that they have not the difficulty which we imagine. To this effect he alleges the similitude of phantoms that we have mentioned, calling them, in the phrase of the poet [Vergil], “shadows terrible to behold”—*terribiles visu formae*. Observe, he does not say that the things were terrible, but that they looked terrible; but go and touch them, and you will see that it is all nothing: so it is in what we have just been speaking about.

CHAPTER IX

That We Owe Much Gratitude to God for Making the Account of Conscience in the Society so Easy and Pleasant, and How It Comes to Be So

WE owe much gratitude to the Lord for the singular favor and benefit He has done to the Society, in that there is in it this manifestation to superiors, and that practised so pleasantly and joyously, although in itself it is more difficult than exterior penances and mortifications. The difficulty there is in it may be well understood from that which is found in sacramental confession, wherein men commonly feel more difficulty than in the rest of the commandments. To lighten the difficulty, it was necessary

that there should be also a divine precept, a most strict precept, of the seal of secrecy in confession. And with all that, some people make such a difficulty over it that, rather than open out, they choose to start a hell for themselves in this life, with fits of remorse and anxiety dogging their steps, and in the next life a hell consummated forever. But when you reveal your whole heart to the superior, you do more than go to confession, since you reveal and declare not only sins, which are the matter of confession, but what is not sin nor matter of sin. And many a time a man is apt to feel more repugnance in mentioning a piece of vulgarity or meanness that he has fallen into than in mentioning graver sins; and what is more, all this is done out of confession. It is, then, a thing greatly to value and to render endless thanks for, that the Lord has made to us so easy and so pleasant a thing in itself so difficult, and otherwise so profitable.

But let us see the reason of this facility and pleasantness of procedure in the Society. The first and chiefest is the grace of religious vocation, for God gives special aid to every religious order to take the means that make for its advancement according to the institute that it professes; that is what we call the grace of vocation. And since for the end which the Society professes—which involves our being liable to tramp the world over, and deal with all sorts of people for the help of souls—it is a means so important and necessary, for reasons given above, that the superior should know us from head to foot, within and without, hence it is that God gives us special support and aid to do this.

The second thing that renders it easy and pleasant is the welcome given by superiors, the fatherly affection that subjects find in them, the gentleness and love with which they receive them, till it looks as though they were there for no other purpose than to hear and console you. This is a thing of much importance, and it is needful for sub-

jects to be persuaded that they shall find this hearty welcome from superiors, that all may have recourse to them with confidence, and not fail on a point so important as this for fear of superiors and their apparent harshness. And a help to their being persuaded of this is the fact that it greatly concerns superiors themselves to give a good welcome to their subjects, it being their office to do so, and they would fail in their duty if they did it not. The blessed St. Bernard on these words of the Canticles (i. 3): *We will be glad and rejoice in thee, mindful of thy affectionate ways, more pleasant and luscious than wine*, gives a very good admonition to superiors. These are his words: "Hear this, ye prelates and superiors, ye who are more anxious to be terrors to your subjects than to do them good. Learn to behave as mothers, not as lords and masters. Try to be loved rather than feared; show even to your subjects a maternal affection, teeming with milk, not puffed out with imperiousness and an air of authority." And he quotes to this effect the saying of St. Paul: *Brethren, if any man for frailty be overtaken by any sin, do ye who are spiritual instruct such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering thyself lest thou too be tempted* (Gal. vi. 1). And that of the Prophet Ezechiel: *The wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I will require at thy hand an account of his blood* (iii. 18). Woe to superiors, he says, who do not give a gracious welcome to their subjects when they have recourse to them in their temptations and weaknesses! Woe to them if they send them away offended and soured, and show them no fatherly affection! If on this account the subject dies or takes a turn for the worse, as may well happen, God will demand an account of it from the superior. Thus, if it were not for your sake, but only for what concerns himself, the superior is forced to do his office well, that you may do yours well.

The third thing that makes this practice easy and agreeable in the Society is the very frequent and common exam-

ple and use of it that exists, and that we see every day in our brethren. We may say here what St. Augustine says occurred to him, when he was thinking of becoming a convert to our Christian religion, and the observance of chastity made a difficulty to him, and he could not bring himself to make up his mind. He put before himself, he says, continence under the figure of a highly honorable lady, who pointed out to him many boys and girls that she kept covered under her large mantle, and many other persons of various states and ages, all very chaste and virtuous; and she said to him with a smile, as if to mock him: "Can't you do what these boys and girls do? Or, think you, that what these boys and girls do, they do of their own strength and not of God?" With this the saint was greatly encouraged. So you may say when the devil puts before you a difficulty: "Come, come, can't you do what they all do? Won't you do what your neighbor does, a man of longer standing, greater learning, more prudence and discretion than you?" This smooths down the difficulties so much that it not only facilitates things, but makes us even feel a difficulty in not doing it, seeing that it would be remarked and give disedification of you not to do what all do. Thus we should all try to secure the continuance of this good practice and custom, for the example of one is an encouragement to others. They who can show the longest standing and most learning are most bound to keep up this and the like practices by their example and by their talk and conversation. Such persons, as they can do most good, are also capable of doing most harm; for the rest have regard to what they do and say, and esteem and follow what they see them esteem and follow. And, besides, it is important for everyone to keep up this use and practice, since thereby it will become easy; while if the use is dropped, in a few days it will become very difficult, as happens in other exercises of humility and mortification. We see it also in the case of confession, that they who leave a twelvemonth

between one confession and another find it a very difficult business, while to them who confess often it is easy and pleasant.

In the fourth place it will be a help to know that what is said to the superior or the prefect of spiritual things is not said as to a judge, but as to a father, that he may give comfort, counsel, and remedy; and that no one can be punished for anything said in this court, even though it deserve punishment, any more than for what is said in confession; for these courts [of conscience and of justice] are different, and no argument can be drawn from the one to the other.

Fifthly, a thing that will greatly forward this manifestation of conscience, and help to confirm what has been said, is noted in our Constitutions: it is that the superior must keep everything secret that is there said. Thus you may be quite sure that what you say in giving an account of conscience will remain in the breast of the superior, and will be known or communicated to none, nor will any harm or disgrace come upon you on that account. Even the natural secret here is binding, and binding under mortal sin; and, besides, our Father General Claudius Aquaviva has backed it up with grave and severe ordinances, adding pains and penalties for those who are careless on this point, even to the length of deposing them from office; and he would have subjects not only made aware of this his ordinance, but, further, know that superiors who fail in the execution and observance of it shall be deposed. As to prevent men from shunning sacramental confession it was necessary also to impose upon priests a strict precept of the seal and secrecy thereof, so likewise, that none may take occasion of shunning manifestation of conscience, our Father has judged it necessary to insist so much on the secrecy of the communication that there may be no cooling down of ardor, no falling off, in an affair of such importance; for, he says, I do not know that there could be anything more pernicious

than that to the good government of the Society, which desires to lead its subjects in the way of perfection by inward training and spiritual direction rather than by outward enactments and penances. Hence superiors will understand what great harm they will do to the order if they are careless of secrecy in these things.

CHAPTER X

Of the Method to Be Observed in Giving an Account of Conscience

POUR out thine heart like water in the sight of the Lord (Lam. ii. 19). By this comparison the Prophet Jeremy declares to us very well how we ought to manifest and declare our heart to him who holds the place of God, when we give an account of conscience; it should be as when we empty out a vessel of water. When a vessel of oil or honey is emptied, some part remains behind, sticking to the vessel; and if it is wine or vinegar, at least the smell remains. But when a vessel of water is emptied, nothing remains sticking to the sides; there remains neither smell, nor taste, nor any trace whatever of what was there, but it is as though the vessel had never held anything. In this way you should empty out and declare your heart before your superior when you give an account of your conscience, so that nothing be left behind, and there remain neither smell nor taste, nor any trace whatsoever.

Because this is a thing of such importance, and such a chief and efficacious means for the spiritual advancement of our souls, our Father has wished that, besides other times that this is done, it should be done more particularly every six months, taking in all that time, and that this manifestation should always go before the renovation of vows. So it has always been practised in the Society, and since the Fourth General Congregation it has been put among the

Common Rules. As besides the ordinary confessions that we make at frequent intervals, he wishes us then to make a general confession of all that time; so he wishes, that, besides the ordinary account which is given at frequent intervals, there should be then given a general account of all that time. It would seem that he could not have given a more appropriate means than this for the spiritual and inward renovation of each. And our Father General Claudius Aquaviva in his "Instruction to Visitors" commends to them greatly the use of this means, and says: "If this practice of giving an account of conscience is done on the part of subjects in the proper way, and is taken as it ought on the part of superiors, it will doubtless tell greatly for the renovation of spirit and augmentation of virtue and perfection in the Society."

In accordance with this pronouncement are certain very grave words spoken by St. Basil, who says: "Whoever wishes to attain any signal and notable perfection, ought to take care that no movement pass in his soul of which he does not give an account to the superior. In this way what is good will be confirmed, and what is not so will be remedied; and thus little by little, getting rid of evil, and planting and causing to take root good, we shall come to arrive at perfection." As in clear water the pebbles and very minute grains of sand which are at the bottom are clearly seen, so the subject should make himself so clear and transparent to his superior that he can see all the motes and imperfections of his soul. And that we may do this the better and more easily, we have in the Society an excellent instruction, on which I wish to observe that, of the two parts which it contains, the first, which is the preface or heading, is the principal; for therein is contained the whole substance of the Fortieth Rule of the Summary of the Constitutions, which treats of the manifestation of conscience and explains how it is to be done. After telling each one to reflect on the importance attached to this observance

in the Constitutions, the rule goes on to say: "Wherefore let each one with great integrity, in confession or under ordinary secrecy, as shall please him and be to his greater comfort, manifest his whole soul entirely, without concealing anything in which he has offended the Lord of all, starting from the last account of conscience that he gave; or at least let him discover the defects that weigh heaviest on his conscience since that time." I say, then, that here is the main element of this business, and anyone who passes over what is said in this preface will not give a good or entire account of his conscience, even though he runs through all the second part, which contains fourteen particular points.

That this may more clearly appear, there will be no need to go through the other points; but let us take for example one of the chief of them, and let it be point the third, which bids us give an account of our temptations, passions, and bad inclinations. This is one of the main things of which a man has to give an account, what temptations he has, whether they are troublesome and importunate, of the ease or difficulty which he finds in resisting them, and the manner in which he does it. This question says no more, nor is anything more said on this head in the whole of the second part of this instruction. But, I ask, will it be enough for giving a good and clear account of one's conscience to one's spiritual father, so that he may know the state of one's soul in this particular, to tell him all one's temptations and all one's evil inclinations? I answer No, but it is necessary to tell also one's falls, if, perchance, there be any; for it is one thing to say: "I am inclined to pride," and another thing to say: "I am so inclined to pride that I desired or did such a thing in order to be regarded and thought well of; and I greatly resented the being told to do this and that, and I made such an excuse to get off doing it, and the only real reason was because I had not the virtue or humility to do it, as otherwise I could have done it

very well." It is one thing to say: "I am passionate and impatient," and another thing to say: "I am so impatient and so passionate that I came to lose my temper, and say such and such a disedifying thing." It is one thing to say: "I have impure temptations," and another thing to say: "I was so weak in the affair that I dwelt and took delight in it," and so forth. It is clear that a different judgment is formed of him who has fallen under temptation from what is formed of him who has had a temptation and bravely and manfully resisted it, and a different treatment is required in the two cases. In a fever case it is very important for the doctor to know, and also very important for the patient to let it be known, whether the patient be a strong and hearty man, or a weak subject; for the treatment of fever is different in the two cases. So it is very important for your spiritual physician, and for you also, that he should know your strength or weakness, to know how to treat you and the remedy that should be applied. It is not enough for you to tell him your temptations and bad inclinations, but you must tell him also of your falls, if there are any, for otherwise there is no knowing your weakness or your virtue and fortitude. And therefore the Forty-first Rule of the Summary, treating also of this matter, tells us to manifest to our superior not only our temptations, but also our failings. This is declared in the preface to this instruction, wherein it is said expressly that the subject must declare his whole soul to his superior, without concealing anything in which he has offended the Divine Majesty, or at least declare the failings that weigh heaviest on his soul; and nothing more is said of this in the fourteen points that follow. So anyone who does not observe this will be turning into an idle ceremony and vain formality a thing of such leading importance and made so much of in the order. This lesson may be profitable to all Christians generally, that they may know how to give an account of their soul to their spiritual fathers.

But to throw further light on this matter, I observe that the subject must not be satisfied with telling his faults in general, but he must tell them in particular, for in that way and in no other does he give a clear account of himself. And the same is also good advice for confession. You must not rest content in confession with saying in general: "I let myself be carried away with bad thoughts;" but you must say to what extent you were carried away. And though the matter be no more than venial sin, and venial sins are not necessary matter of confession, nevertheless, if we do confess them, as it is right we should confess them, we should not speak in generalities, which considerably gloss over the fault, but also mention any particular circumstance which adds to the gravity of the case. For clearly a penitent does not quite declare his fault by saying: "I have said offensive words, impatient words, or words of detraction," when the word was such that the telling of it will make the fault appear greater than a general expression would show. And if one has failed in obedience, and given notable disedification thereby, one should not rest satisfied with saying: "I accuse myself of having failed in obedience," but he should specify the particular thing or the particular manner, so far as it throws more light on the fault and alters the confessor's judgment of it. In like manner I say, in giving an account of conscience, the thing should not be done in general expressions and roundabout phrases, but with great simplicity, thoroughness, and clearness, without there remaining the least corner hidden away, or tiny pocket not laid open, according to what St. Paul says of the Church: *That Christ might make appear before his eyes one full of glory, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and unspotted* (Eph. v. 27). It is in wrinkles that dirt and grime is apt to hide; so there should not be in our soul any wrinkle or fold of any sort, but all should be plain and smooth.

Our Father requires anyone entering the order to give a

clear account of his conscience, not only declaring the bad inclinations that he has at present, and the vices and sins to which now he is most inclined, but also the bad inclinations that he had, and the vices and sins which troubled and assailed him most in his past life. As it is a great help to the doctor if his patient will tell him not only the illness that he feels at present, but also the illnesses that he has had, that he may guess whether the present indisposition comes from that quarter, and so treat him for the present as to prevent any possibility of a recurrence of the past; so in spiritual things, if you wish to give a clear and entire account of your soul to your spiritual physician, you should not only tell him your present habits and inclinations, but also your past, for from thence there may often be inferred the cause and root of the present trouble. For this they are wont to advise anyone making a general confession to make it to the priest whom he intends to choose for his ordinary confessor in future, that he may be the better able to help him for having fuller knowledge of his soul. The temptations and evil motions that a man feels at present are apt many a time to be traces and remnants of old weaknesses, the penalty and punishment of an evil past life; and so, however recollected and fenced in from the world the man now be, he will suffer against his will what he would not, in pain and penalty for past license and evil habits. In that case there is no reason for him to be frightened; what he has to do is to practise patience and humility, and try to gather from it sorrow and shame, not only for the present, but also for the past; and so it will do him no harm.

Finally, it is to be observed here that giving an account of one's conscience and going to confession, generally, are distinct things in the Society, as is evident from the different rules that we have on the subject and by the difference of their purpose and matter. It is at the same time a certain fact that anyone may give an account of his conscience

either in confession or out of confession, as shall better please him and make for the greater comfort of his soul, since that is expressly stated in the Constitutions. But here is to be observed a thing which our Father General Claudius Aquaviva observes in the instruction which he gave to visitors. And this being such a serious subject, I have thought it well to put here Father Aquaviva's exact words, which are the following. After having laid down the difference there is between an account of conscience and confession, and after having said that anyone that likes may give his account of conscience in confession, he goes on to say: "Wherefore, though no one is to be obliged in the Society to give his account of conscience out of confession—seeing that the Constitutions leave it to the choice of each in view of his greater comfort and consolation—yet they deserve praise who, excepting things which properly belong to confession, which things may be manifested to the superior in confession, give their account of conscience out of confession, and reveal themselves entirely to the superior, that superiors may use this knowledge freely, and without let or hindrance, to direct and govern their subjects to their greater advantage and to the greater service of God." Thus it is better to give the account of conscience out of confession, and so to show greater confidence in the superior; even as he who puts a jewel into the hand of his friend to keep for him shows greater confidence in him than if he gave it in a casket locked and sealed and took away the key.

CHAPTER XI

Answers to Certain Doubts Arising from the Above

FROM what has been said certain doubts arise, which may possibly occur to anyone. The first is this. We have said that on the one hand it is better to give the

account of conscience out of confession; and on the other that this account of conscience should be not only of temptations and evil inclinations, but also of failings and falls, if there are any; and if declaration is not made of them, it will not be a good account of conscience. Then I ask: "If, which God forbid, one is overcome by the force of temptation so far as to have a grave and shameful fall, is it possible that the rule should require him to give an account of that to the superior out of confession? That, it would seem, is a difficult and very uphill thing, and commonly could not be endured." To that I say that in such a case it is not the intention of the rule, nor of our Father, that that should be told out of confession; rather, this was one of the chief reasons why the rule gives an alternative, allowing one to do this under ordinary secrecy or in confession, as shall be for the individual's greater comfort. And this is declared expressly in one of the rules of the Provincial, where on the question of giving and taking an account of conscience, after the subject has had his say, it is said that the Provincial may ask him any question that he thinks proper, but with this reserve, that "questions that would put the man to great shame are not to be asked out of confession"—*quae hominem pudore multum afficerent, ea extra confessionem interroganda non essent*. Such things as these, not only should not the superior, or the spiritual father either, ask about out of confession, but neither should they allow the other so to tell them. Chaste ears should not hear such things out of confession, so it is better to reserve them for that occasion. And that is what our Father General means to say in the words we quoted in the last chapter, where, after saying that they do better who give their account out of confession, he adds, "apart from certain things that are properly kept for confession."

The second doubt is more serious. We have said on the one hand, and our Father says it expressly in his Constitutions, that the purpose of giving an account of conscience

to superiors is that so they may be able better to rule and govern their subjects, by not being ignorant of anything concerning them, and may be able to order and provide what is fitting, as well for individuals as for the whole body of the Society; and on the other hand, according to the same Constitutions, anyone may give this account in confession: hence it seems to follow that the government of the Society and of its superiors is done through the confessional. This difficulty has given no little food for thought to some through their not understanding how the thing works in the Society. To make it understood, I say in the first place that so far is the Society from governing through the confessional, that even what some theologians say the confessor may do without breaking the seal in the way of availing himself sometimes of what he knows in confession, is a doctrine which our Father General Claudius Aquaviva most severely forbids anyone to teach in the Society, or in any way put in practice; confessors are to behave in these things as though any knowledge they happen to have in confession were non-existent. This is in accordance with a decree and mandate on this matter issued four years after by His Holiness Clement VIII, which decree is quoted by Father Francis Suarez and others. And the Society does more than that, for even of the account of conscience given out of confession she orders secrecy to be observed with great care, as we said in the ninth chapter. Now, when such a great caution is observed over things that are known out of confession, what will be done in matters relating to confession, so as not to render it odious, and not to commit any sacrilege against the seal?

Now to meet the exact point of the difficulty, I say that it is nowise undesirable that the spiritual and interior government of souls be carried on by means of confession, but rather that is just one of the great fruits and advantages of the sacrament. By the penitent's clear declaration of all his wounds, ailments, and weaknesses, the con-

fessor, acting as physician of the soul, can apply to it the treatment and give it the remedy that is most to the purpose and direct it as it ought to be directed. In so high a degree is this true that in the canon law Pope Alexander III orders that, for this end alone of guiding and directing souls and giving them the advice that suits them, the confessions should be heard of those persons who are so wicked and sinful as to be incapable of absolution. Such people say that it is impossible for them to observe continence or keep from sinning, and therefore they have not a true purpose of amendment. Yet, though they cannot be absolved, the sovereign pontiff then advises their going to confession and confessing all their sins, and giving an account of their evil life and their want of the requisite dispositions for this confession. And he bids the confessor receive and hear them kindly in order to give them wholesome advice and remedy; for perchance thereby their heart will be touched, and they will give up the occasions of sin; and by this act of humility, and sundry good works which they will be directed to practise, the Lord will open their eyes so that they shall entirely give over their sin and make a good confession. Thus it is no new thing, but a very ancient and usual and well-approved practice of the Church, to take confession for a means of guiding and directing souls in this manner.

We read of our blessed Father Ignatius in his Life that, when he was elected General of the Society by the votes of all the first fathers, again and again he stood out against the election, saying that he was not fit for the post. He was greatly importuned on all hands to accept, and told that his refusal was a resistance to the will of God, well declared by the unanimous choice of all. In the end, for all that they could do, they could not get him to acquiesce at the time. They had to come to a compromise with him, and accept an expedient which he proposed, which was this. He said: "I will put the whole business in the hands of my

confessor; I will give him an account of the sins of my whole life, and declare the bad habits and inclinations of my soul, my weaknesses and miseries, past and present, spiritual and corporal; and if with all that he shall command and counsel me in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to take on me so great a charge, I will obey him." He did so. He went into retreat for some days, made his general confession to a holy man named Friar Theophilus, of the Order of St. Francis, and then asked him what he thought of it. He replied that his opinion was that he should undertake the charge of the government of the Society, and that in resisting the election he would be resisting the Holy Ghost. Thereupon he accepted the charge which they wanted to put upon him. Now I ask, will anyone be found, how malevolent soever, to open his mouth against this act of our blessed Father Ignatius, to slander it or see any sign of artifice in it? There is none, I believe, who could open his mouth otherwise than to praise it; and so it is related in his Life to his great praise and credit. Now the manner in which our Lord raised our Father to be head and founder of this order, is exactly the manner in which he teaches us to proceed; and so he prescribes to us this practice of declaring to the superior in confession, or simply under secrecy, all our bad inclinations, vices, and passions, and all our faults and imperfections, that so the superior may the better direct us in the way of virtue and perfection which we profess.

So I say that the public and exterior government of the Society is not and cannot be through the confessional; but it is very suitable, and sometimes necessary for the spiritual and interior government of souls, that it should be by way of confession in the manner that has been said. Thus we see it to be the practice throughout the Church of God that, when anyone has doubts and difficulties as to his behavior in any particular conjuncture, he chooses a prudent and learned confessor, and in confession or simply

under seal of secrecy, as may be for his greater comfort, gives him an account of the business, to get counsel and direction therein. That is just what our Father means when he says that this account of conscience may be given in confession if it be to the greater comfort of the subject to do so. Thus Rectors in the Society are not appointed or deposed from anything known in confession, nor professed, nor professors, nor any other officials; that would be an error, a great error, and it would also be an error on the part of anyone who thought such a thing of the Society.

But it must be observed here as a thing of great importance, that such a conjuncture may arrive and such circumstances concur as to warrant the confessor to oblige his penitent, whoever he be, in conscience and under pain of sin, to put it to the superior not to place him in such an office, or send him on such a mission, and remove him from such an occasion of sin, declaring to him the cause and the manifest danger which he feels would be incurred therein, considering his weakness. In such a case, I ask, what better or more honorable means could be given to the person than to tell him to go and declare the case to the superior in confession? For then, with all honor to the party concerned and to his order, the superior can remove him from the occasion, and not expose him to dangers too great for his strength; so the remedy will be found and his honor saved. And all this the superior then does, not only with the leave and consent of the party concerned, but even at his request, the importance of the matter calling for it. And at other times, though the penitent is not so sure whether he is being exposed to danger or not, and yet is in fear and doubt about it, in such cases it is a great relief and consolation to declare your doubt and difficulty to the superior and put yourself in his hands; for then if you are put in that situation, the danger will not fall on you, as it would have done had you not declared yourself, but it will be all laid to the charge of the superior; and God will concur with

the obedient man and give him strength to come well out of what they have commanded him, since he has done what in him lay.

In the third place I say that, though it is true that a man can give his account of conscience in confession, according to the rule, yet the better and more praiseworthy course is to do it out of confession, as has been said. And as all now know this, they commonly wish to choose the better part, which is to give it out of confession. That puts an end to all scruples and murmurs and suspicions that might arise about superiors' governing by what they know in confession, since all commonly give this account out of it. And even in the case that we spoke of in the first doubt, of one choosing to give this account in confession, there is no religious, however imperfect he be, who would not be glad, and ask for it, that in view of what will make for the good of his soul, and to deliver him from occasions of sin and not expose him to dangers, the superior should be able to make use of what he says in confession, provided it be in such a way that no harm may come upon him thereby, but only good, and that others should not be able to get wind of any fault or imperfection of his; for in this way he loses nothing and gains much, and obliges the superior to look even more carefully to the saving of his honor. And thus it comes to be that even that spiritual and interior government of souls, which might be lawfully and holily based upon what is known only by confession, is not usually practised in the Society, but we go only by what is known out of confession, as has been said. For all rejoice and find more comfort in giving their account out of confession of all that is needful for this purpose, that so the superior may be able more easily, and without any consideration arising out of confession, to guide them and help them in the way of perfection.

St. Bonaventure lays down this doctrine explicitly, and says that it is very proper for the superior to know right

well the consciences of his subjects, their inclinations and habits; and also that he should be well acquainted with the corporal and spiritual strength of each, that so he may be able better to rule and govern them, portioning out and entrusting to everyone the task and charge that suits him according to his strength, for not all are alike equal to all things. He quotes to this effect that saying of Scripture: *Aaron and his sons shall enter into the sanctuary, and they shall arrange the labors of all, and apportion the burden which each one is to bear* (Num. iv. 19). St. Bonaventure says that Aaron and his sons are prelates and superiors, higher and lower, whose office it is to enter there into the interior of their subjects, and know the virtue, strength, and capacity of each, that so they may be able to portion out and distribute offices, charges, and ministries of religion according to the virtue and capacity of each one, *to everyone according to his proper ability* (Matt. xxv. 15).

TWENTY-FOURTH TREATISE

ON FRATERNAL CORRECTION



CHAPTER I

That Correction Is a Mark of Love, and the Great Good There Is in It

THE blessed St. Bernard says that it is a great mark of God's loving us as sons when He rebukes and chastises us. And Holy Writ is full of the same thought. *Whomsoever God loveth, He chastiseth, and taketh pleasure in him as a father in a son*, says the Wise Man (Prov. iii. 12). And St. John in the Apocalypse: *Those whom I love, I rebuke and chastise* (iii. 19). And the Apostle St. Paul: *Whomsoever God loveth, he chastiseth, and scourgeth every-one whom he receiveth as a son: for what son is there whom his father doth not correct?* (Heb. xii. 6-7). And so the saints say that it is one of the special benefits and favors that God does to a soul, when He rebukes it and strikes it with heartfelt remorse of conscience upon its falling into sin and committing a fault. It is a great sign of the love of God, and of your being of the number of the elect, that He does not abandon you entirely, but calls and invites you by this remorse. Where this rebuke and heartfelt remorse are wanting, and God sends no chastisement, they say that it is a sign of His great anger, and that this is one of the greatest punishments that God inflicts in this life. St. Bernard applies to it the words of Ezechiel: *And my indignation at thee shall cease, and my jealousy of thee shall be taken away; I will no more show my displeasure at thee by rebuking thee* (xvi. 42); which is what the Lord had said by Isaias: *I have sworn no more to be angry with thee, and I will rebuke thee no more* (liv. 9). God utters this as a great threat. It shows God's greatest anger, says St. Bernard, when He ceases to be angry and ceases to rebuke. If God's jealousy of you and His rebuking of you has not abandoned you, neither has His love; for such is the kindness which God shows to His friends.

Now as in God this is an indication and sign of His loving us as sons, so also in the superior, one of the things that most shows his love for a subject is his charitably correcting him and admonishing him of the faults that are observed in him, that he may amend them. *Better is plain correction than a love that maketh no show* (Prov. xxvii. 5). Excellent is the inward charity and love that you bear me, but that is your affair; little good will it do me if you do not come to show it in deeds. But when the superior's love goes so far as to admonish me of a fault which I had not seen or did not take to be a fault, that I may amend it, that is the greatest love and the most profitable for me. This is love shown in act; the true love of a father, desirous of the good of his son. For if the superior did not love you as a son and desire your spiritual good and improvement, he would not take you in hand nor warn you of your fault. We see here in life how, when a father catches his son playing some prank, he at once rebukes and chastises him, because he is his son, and he loves him as a son and wants him to be good and virtuous; whereas, if he were not his son, though he saw him doing something that he had better not, he would leave him alone and say nothing to him and take no notice of him. "Let his father look to him and teach him better; he is no concern of mine." Moreover, not only does the superior hereby show that he loves you as a son, but he shows also his conviction that you love him as a father, and are convinced that he loves you, and speaks thus to you with the affection of a father and for the desire that he has of your good. He shows also that he is satisfied with you, that you have virtue and humility enough to receive the correction and admonition, since otherwise he would not give it you.

On the other hand, when the superior does not deal with you so openly and plainly, admonishing you of your faults and of what shocks people and makes them complain of your conduct, it is because he does not love you as a son, or

because he has made up his mind that you do not love him as a father, or because he thinks that you have not virtue enough to take admonition and correction well, all of which shows lack of love and esteem on his part. There is no true love there. Possibly there may be some outward show of it; but it will not be true love, only apparent and put on. What is the use of giving you outward marks of love and regard, if at heart he takes you for a defaulter and deficient in this and that respect and dares not tell you of it? This is duplicity and pretense, making an outward show of sentiment and putting on a face different from what you feel interiorly. This is the behavior and language of the world. There in the world people go on in this manner because they dare not say what they think, and so they put on a countenance which belies what they feel at heart. They will often praise and flatter you, and make a show of thinking well of your conduct, while at heart they think quite otherwise, according to the saying of the prophet: *His words are smoother than oil, but they stab* (Psalm liv. 22). *With their mouth they blessed me, but they cursed me at heart* (Psalm lxi. 5). *Their tongues are flattering* (Psalm v. ii), *but the poison of asps is under their lips* (Psalm cxxxix. 4). But here in religion there should be nothing of this double-dealing. Everything should be clear and smooth; the charity and union that we profess does not allow of anything else. What? Have I got a fault, or many faults, which perhaps I do not see, or do not take them for faults, nor have any idea that they shock other people; and the superior sees them, and knows that others are shocked and complain of them, and yet there is none to tell me of them? That is not charity. Our Father Francis Borgia says very well: "If you had your cloak wrong way on, or a black smudge on your face, evidently anyone would do you a charity who warned you of it, and you would thank him; while on the other hand you would resent it, and take it for an ill turn, if another saw and did not

tell you. With much more reason should we be of that same mind and sentiment in regard of deficiencies in virtue which disedify our brethren."

So we ought to take it for a great blessing to have someone lovingly and charitably warning us of our faults, for with the great love that we bear ourselves we often fail to see them, or do not take them for faults. Affection and self-love blind us, as in the case of the mother, who for the great love that she bears her own will take the ugly child for beautiful and call the negro ruddy. So there are never wanting to us colorable pretexts for coloring and covering over our faults. That is why philosophers say that no man is a good judge in his own cause; since, if the laws hold in suspicion any judge who is a friend of either party to a suit, how much more should a man be suspect in his own cause, being such a friend of himself! A third party, viewing our case with dispassionate eyes, will be better able to see our faults and a better judge of them. Besides, as they say, two pair of eyes see better than one.

Plutarch says that we should give money to buy an enemy, since enemies are they who tell us the truth; while friends nowadays are all adulation and flattery, telling you that there is nothing left to desire, while there is nothing in you that they think well of. We see how usual this is at the present day in the world, and God grant that the usage may not come into religion! We men are so vain that we hear these things with relish, and even believe them, where we ought to do the contrary, as did the Royal Prophet when he said: *Let the just correct me in kindness and rebuke me, but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head* (Psalm cxl. 5). The blessed St. Augustine says that by the smooth unction of the sinner is understood adulation and flattery, which the prophet holds in abhorrence, and would rather be corrected by the just with severity and mercy than praised and flattered with these smooth adulations, since they serve

for nothing but to make a greater fool of a man and add to his illusions. He quotes the saying of Isaias (iii. 12) : *My people, they who praise and say wonderful things of thee are they who deceive and ruin thee.* Contrariwise, they who correct and admonish us do us a great favor. *Better the wounds of a friend than the false kisses of an enemy* (Prov. xxvii. 6). *Better be corrected by the wise than led astray by the flattery of fools* (Eccles. vii. 6). That which gives pain is that which heals; the other is no treatment at all, but makes the cure more difficult, because we persuade ourselves that there is no fault, and so never set to work amending it.

Diogenes used to say that for the correction of your faults you should have a right true friend to admonish you, or else a bitter enemy to scold you; thus between the warning of the one and the scolding of the other your vice and fault is got rid of. The second is the way of the world, where faults are not told except where there are enmities; then true faults are discovered. But here in religion faults are not told, nor rebuke and admonition given, in hatred or rancor, or out of animosity and ill-will that they bear against you, but with true love and desire of your good. We rejoice in the former of those two advantages, in that we have in the superior a faithful and true friend, who with great love warns us of our faults. We should set great store by that, and reckon that he discovers to us a treasure when he warns us of some defect which, if we did not know of, we should never amend.

CHAPTER II

*That Pride Is the Cause of Our Not Taking
Correction Well*

ONE of the things in which man's great pride is best seen is the great difficulty with which he takes correction and warning of his faults, a difficulty so great that you will hardly find anyone willing to accept such correction and warning. St. Augustine says very well: "Who shall easily find a man willing to be reproved? And where shall we find that wise man, of whom it is said in Proverbs (ix. 8): *Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee?*" Know for certain that he is a wise man, since he knows how to receive lovingly so great a benefit as is that of correction; but where are such wise men to be found? *Who is he, and we will praise him* (Ecclus. xxxi. 9). St. Gregory says: "We are so full of pride, and it is so rooted in our hearts, that we cannot bear to hear our faults told, nor brook reprehension, because we take it to be an injury to our character and a disparagement of what we are worth. That touches us to the quick, as a thing affecting our honor, and we at once resent it, and instead of being grateful we make a grievance of it, and fancy we are being wronged and persecuted." So some speak out clearly; when they are corrected and admonished repeatedly of their defects, they say that they are being persecuted and spitefully treated. There are besides, says the saint, some who acknowledge and tell their faults willingly; but when others tell them of them and find fault with them, they at once get excited, defend and excuse themselves, because they cannot brook being rated at that. These people are not humble, and do not tell their faults with true knowledge of what they are. If they were humble, and reckoned themselves to be in fault, and said such things feeling what they said, they would not so much resent others' saying it to

them, nor excuse and defend themselves at such length.

True humility consists in knowing yourself and making little account of yourself, and desiring that others likewise should know your faults and not make much of you. Those other people, says St. Gregory, let it clearly appear that they do not tell their faults from any desire of being made small account of, but to appear good and humble, since it is written: *The just man is the first accuser of himself* (Prov. xviii. 17). You want to gain honor and pass for humble, and take the telling of your faults to be a good means to that end; that is why you tell them. But you do not think it a good means to gain honor to have another person telling you them and rebuking you; rather you take that for a thing redounding to your dishonor and discredit, and therefore you cannot stand it. Both the one and the other is pride. Hence it is that, though the man sees that what they admonish him of is true, and there is reason for saying it, nevertheless he is troubled and feels it deeply.

Thus we shall no more say: *Rebuke the wise man, and he will love thee*, since we no longer find nowadays these wise men who are glad to be found fault with, and take correction and admonition thankfully. What we can say today is what the same Wise Man said a little before on this subject: *Beware of correcting and rebuking the scorner and the proud man, because he will hold thee in abhorrence* (Prov. ix. 8), and you will make a bad job of him. That is the usual thing now, and what we commonly see in the world. Evil men love not, but rather hold in abhorrence, those who admonish them of their defects and tell them the truth. *Veritas odium parit*—"Truth begets hatred." The saints liken them to patients out of their mind and mad, who will not let the doctor come near them, but shun him and resist his treatment and applications, and throw them aside, such being the grievousness of their malady and such their insensibility to the fact that they are ill. This is the comparison made by the Holy Ghost: *He that hateth*

rebukes is a fool (Prov. xii. 1). Speaking of the man who abhors correction and admonition, I not only say that he is wanting in virtue and humility, but also that he is wanting in common sense and judgment; he is mad and off his mind, since he refuses medical treatment, and resists the physician and vents his indignation upon him who wants to come and heal him.

CHAPTER III

Of the Inconveniences and Losses That Follow from Not Taking Correction Well

THIS pride and folly goes so far that now scarcely any one is found to venture to correct and advise another of his faults, since no one is willing to undertake a bad job, or as they say, to provoke an uproar at his own expense. And the man gets what he deserves for this. For what does the sick man deserve who will not let himself be attended to? He deserves to go unattended and be left to die. Now that is what he deserves who will not be corrected and takes amiss any admonition given him. *He who hateth reproofs shall die; he who casteth off discipline, despiseth his own soul*, says the Wise Man (Prov. xv. 10, 32). He deserves that no one should correct him or admonish him of anything; that he should come to have grave faults, manifest to all the rest of the community, and people should be complaining of them, and yet there should be no one to tell him. Such is the usual fate of such folk, and it is one of the greatest punishments that could befall them. *Curavimus Babylonem et non est sanata, derelinquamus eam*—"He has no mind to profit by attention and medical care, let us leave him" (Isaias li. 9). When a vineyard is left unpruned and undug, it is gone to waste. So they leave a man forlorn, giving him up for lost, for his not taking well advice and correction.

Our Father Francis Borgia, speaking of the inconveniences and mischiefs that follow from not taking correction and admonition well, says that thence we are likely to settle down in one or other of two very awkward situations. They will be these. Either for lack of correction and warnings defects will come to be fixtures, seated and, as it were, quite at home in those who have them, there being no one to dare to set about applying a remedy to such an impatient sick person; or, if admonitions are given to him who needs them, and he, instead of being grateful, draws from thence bitterness and resentment, and holds aloof from his admonitor, in a few days the house will become a stagnant pool of gall and bitterness. This will be due to want of knowledge on the part of its imperfect members, who will not admit of advice and correction, but take for a wrong what they ought to take for a great benefit, and are aggrieved and irritated where they ought to be grateful, turning their remedy into poison. Thus one should greatly fear: "Are they leaving me to myself for a cure, because I am a bad patient? Are they giving over admonishing me of my faults, because at one time I did not take the correction and admonition well?" Our Father Francis desired in his day that we should keep and carry on that simplicity, charity, and plainness of speech that marked our beginnings, when correction and an admonition of a defect not only gave no occasion for bitterness, but begot heartfelt love and great gratitude.

A grave doctor likens those who will not take correction to the devil, because they make themselves incorrigible. Now to be open to correction or incorrigible is what marks off the sinful man from the devil; for man, however sinful he be, while he is in this mortal life is capable of correction, and the devil not. He quotes accordingly the saying of the Wise Man: *He that abhorreth correction is as the footstep of the sinner* (Ecclus. xxi. 7), that is, of the devil, who is called by excellence the sinner. As the footprint

and impress of the foot is like the foot, so he who abhors correction is just like the devil in making himself incorrigible, since he shuts the door to one of the most proper, powerful, and effectual means of amendment. St. Basil says of such folk a thing worthy of consideration: "The conversation and company of these people who refuse correction and take advice badly is very hurtful to the rest of the religious with whom they live. By their bad example they spread the infection of having little taste, or rather no taste at all, for being corrected and advised; thus they draw folk away from the end and purpose for which they came into religion, which was amendment and reform." He would have such people removed from intercourse and conversation with the rest, that they may not spread the infection.

CHAPTER IV

How Important It Is to Take Correction and Admonition Well

A PHILOSOPHER here gives a very good piece of advice, such that it would seem nothing more could be asked for in this matter. That philosopher is Galen, who, not content with writing maxims for the cure of bodies, has also written a book how to know and cure the ailments of the soul. There this philosopher says: Anyone who wishes to amend his faults and make progress in virtue, should seek out a good and prudent man to warn him of them; and if he finds a proper person for that purpose, he should call him aside and ask him very earnestly to do him the favor of admonishing him of all the faults that he observes in him, offering and promising to be very grateful for it and to take him for a true friend; telling him that hereby he will do him a greater favor and benefit than if he cured him of some ailment of the body, inasmuch as the soul is more than the body. And if the other undertakes this

office, and says that he will do so, and afterwards some days pass without his admonishing him of anything, complain to him, he says, and ask him once more, more earnestly than you did the first time, not to do so, but admonish you at once when he sees you in any fault. And if he answers you that he certainly has not been unmindful of his promise, but that all this time there has been nothing in you that deserved unfavorable notice, do not believe him at all, but make up your mind that the reason of his not having admonished you has not been that there have been no faults giving ground for admonition, but one of three things. Either through negligence and carelessness on his part he has taken no account of your defects and forgotten all about it—for there are very few who will take such care and charge themselves in this manner with your improvement; or in the second place, if he has observed and noticed any faults in you, as possibly he may have noticed some, understand that he has failed to tell you out of shyness and bashfulness, and because he did not want to get out of your good graces and lose your friendship, knowing that that is what comes of telling truths nowadays; or thirdly, because perhaps on one occasion he saw that you did not take well the correction and admonition he gave you, and therefore (notwithstanding all that you had said) he could not believe that you were in earnest in your desire of being corrected and admonished, since he attached more faith to deeds than to words. He goes on to say: "Even though sometimes the matter on which your friend admonishes you is not so, or is not so great as he says, still take care not to disavow it or excuse it; in the first place, because it may be that your friend is a shrewder observer than you are, for it is much easier to see another's faults than one's own; secondly, because, even though the case was not as stated, still it will do you good to be more cautious and better on your guard as to your behavior, and more careful henceforth to give no occasion for the like mistakes."

All this is said by that philosopher, and all of it is necessary if we are to find anyone who will cheerfully do us this kindness. There is great difficulty in doing it, as anyone may see for himself, not only on the side of the person corrected, being so sensitive to correction and rebuke, but also on the side of the giver of the correction, when he is commissioned to admonish others to correct some fault that they have got. Even to the superior himself this is one of his greatest troubles when there is scant virtue and humility in his subjects. On the one hand he feels obliged to correct them by reason of his office, and on the other he is afraid that they cannot but resent the correction and admonition. He goes about it as though he had to give them the cautery, all in a perspiration himself, and sometimes in perplexity as to whether he shall mention the thing or leave it alone. Now he thinks it will be well to mention it, watching for some good opportunity and favorable conjuncture, and employing some manner of salve and sugary words to diminish the bitterness of the reproof. Another time he experiences such difficulty on the part of the subject that he thinks it better to leave the thing unmentioned, although the fault is there. He is afraid that the mention of it will do more harm than good, and will serve for nothing but to inflame the wound and make things still more unpleasant, one possible result being that the offender henceforth will do his office or ministry with less liking and less ease than before. The sun softens and melts wax, but dries and hardens mud. When plants have taken firm root in the soil, air and sun help to make them grow and fructify; but if they are not well rooted, these same agencies and influences dry them up and make them rot the sooner. On this motive superiors cease to admonish some of their subjects of their defects, because they get worse under treatment and turn their medicine into poison. They fancy that to be spite and aversion and ill will, which is really love and desire of their good, and so they deserve to be left alone.

If, then, you do not want to be given up as incorrigible and incurable, you must take admonition and correction very well. *How good it is, on being rebuked, to show repentance!* (Ecclus. xx. 4). How good it is, and how well it looks, on being corrected and admonished of one's fault, to recognize it and show regret for it and purpose of amendment! And though on some occasion you have not committed the fault that they admonish you of, or it has not been in that manner or so great as that, you should not show it, but thank your admonitor for his good will and the good turn he does you, and promise him amendment, saying that you will keep an eye on that in future, and that he has done you a great charity, for thus you will encourage him to admonish you another time; whereas, if you at once set to work excusing and defending yourself, he will not advise you another time of what perhaps it was quite necessary you should be told. There are people who, when they are admonished of any fault, at once excuse themselves; and when they cannot excuse it altogether, they look for reasons to diminish and make less of it, showing that it was not so bad. This is the way to shut the door against anyone's admonishing you another time; for, as your admonitor sees that upon sundry admonitions you never have acknowledged your fault, but always find excuses to get out of it, he makes up his mind never more to speak to you of the thing. This is what you get by your excuses, or satisfactions, as you call them, that no one now will ever give you an admonition; and besides, all such behavior is disedifying and looks bad.

Even in superiors it is taken to be a great fault not to take well the admonitions and counsels given them, nor show any disposition to hear them willingly. This is so true that they say it is better to choose for government a man of less wisdom, if he is aware of his deficiencies and takes well the admonitions and counsels of the wise, than another who knows more, and is very confident in himself,

thinking that he knows all about it, and having no taste for admonitions nor any readiness to take in good part the advice given him. Scripture is full of this topic, especially the Sapiential Books. *Hast thou seen a man wise in his own conceit? There is more hope of a fool than of him* (Prov. xxvi. 12). *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the wise man takes counsel of another* (Prov. xii. 15). *I, wisdom, dwell in counsel* (Prov. viii. 12). *In abundance of counsel there is prosperity* (Prov. xi. 14). And one of the conditions that the Apostle St. James lays down of the wisdom that descends from heaven, is that it is not contentious nor obstinate, but peaceful and open to persuasion (James iii. 17). Now, if it is a praiseworthy thing in superiors willingly to hear the admonition and advice of private persons, and the opposite course is blameworthy and reprehensible, with how much greater reason are inferiors open to reprehension, when they take not well advice and correction even from superiors!

That we may set more store by this and animate ourselves more to it, it is well that we should understand and consider one great advantage there is in it. It is that, when the subject takes admonition and correction well, and the superior is satisfied on that point, faults give the superior little concern, because if they are seen, the remedy is seen along with them. But when this is not the case, the door is seen to be shut against the requisite remedy. These are the distresses and anxieties of superiors. Thus it is a good plan for one in private station to tell the superior of the readiness and desire that he has of being admonished, and to beg him in all earnestness as a father to correct and admonish him with clearness and plainness of all his shortcomings; and not to mind if on some occasion possibly he has resented correction as a man and not taken it as well as he should. And he should not be satisfied with making this request once for all, or saying the thing as a formality, but he should do it time after time and with great

earnestness. Make sure that all this importunity is necessary to get yourself believed, and have this service rendered you well and carefully, as the difficulty of it requires. Thus, though in other things we should rejoice at being taken for imperfect men and unmortified, since there are plenty of things in which we are such, yet in this you should not allow, or give occasion for the superior to think of you, that you are so proud or so unmortified as not to take well the correction or warning that he may give you; rather, try to let him be quite satisfied on this point, that you may not be deprived of so great a benefit and such a principal means of your improvement.

St. Basil says: "As the sick man, desirous and anxious for the recovery of his health, takes in good part the treatment that the doctor gives him, though it be rough and hard, and is not angry with his physician, nor harbors the thought that he means any mischief in treating him so; so the humble man, desirous in good earnest of his spiritual improvement, takes correction and admonition in good part, without thinking for a moment that it is done out of ill-will or passion." If for the recovery of bodily health we willingly take very bitter medicines, and permit the physician or surgeon to cut and burn where he pleases, and we are grateful for it and take it for a great boon, so it will be reasonable, says St. Basil, that we should do the same for the spiritual health of our soul and the general good of all our order, even though the treatment and correction be rough and hard.

CHAPTER V

*What Has Been Said in the Foregoing Chapter
Confirmed by Examples*

ST. CHRYSOSTOM, to exhort us to take correction and admonition well, brings the example related in Holy Writ of Moses. Moses was a man so eminent for wisdom that God at last chose him for leader of His people, and worked many miracles for him as well in Egypt as in the desert. Nevertheless he took very well the advice and counsel a man in private station, Jethro, his father-in-law, gave him, as regards his office as governor and judge of his people, not to seek to do everything himself, but to choose some to help him in the work: *That is not a good plan of thine, foolishly fatiguing and wearing thyself out with so much labor* (Exod. xviii. 17-18). St. Chrysostom there observes that he did not answer: "See who is coming now to give us advice!" as many do who, though the advice be good, disdain to take it from such a person giving it them; but he took the advice with humility, and put it into execution.

St. Cyprian and St. Augustine observe to this same effect the example of the Apostle St. Peter, when St. Paul reproved him concerning circumcision, which he wished at the time them to receive who were converted from heathendom [not so Gal. ii. 11-12]. See, he says, how the Apostle St. Peter did not presume on himself, nor take an attitude of superiority, saying: "I am primate of the Church, and to me the greater credit should be given, and all should follow and obey." See how he did not despise St. Paul for having been a persecutor of the Church, and did not disdain to be corrected and advised by him, but took the admonition very well, and gave in at once to reason and truth.

That example also is worthy of memory which the Emperor Theodosius gave, taking with such great humility the correction and admonition which St. Ambrose gave him,

when he excommunicated him and forbade him to enter the church on account of the cruel and unjust punishment which he had inflicted on the city of Thessalonica; and again when Theodosius had offered his gift at the altar, and wanted to stay within the sanctuary rails. St. Ambrose sent to tell him to go out into the body of the church, since that place was reserved for the priests, and the purple robe makes emperors, but not priests, as is recounted at length in the Ecclesiastical History, where with reason the question is raised which is most worthy of praise, the constancy and fortitude of the holy bishop, or the marvelous obedience and humility of that most religious prince.

Of the same St. Ambrose it is told in his Life that, when people admonished him of some fault, he rendered thanks for it and reckoned it a singular benefit. In the chronicles of the Cistercian Order it is told of a monk of the Monastery of Clairvaux, that every time he was reproved or admonished of any fault, he recited at least one Our Father for his admonitor. And it is said there that this custom continued in that monastery, and was observed as an inviolable rule.

Simon Metaphrustes tells of the holy Abbot Arsenius, a man famous for holiness all over the monastic world, and who in the world had held high rank as tutor to the Emperor Theodosius' sons, Arcadius and Honorius, who afterwards succeeded their father and were emperors themselves, that for all his sanctity he had some little faults from which his holiness did not deliver him. As he had been of such high rank and had lived in such comfort in the world, there remained with him some remnants of the easy ways and liberty of the palace where he had been brought up; thus, when he sat with the rest of the community, he had a way of crossing his legs. This looked bad to all the fathers as being contrary to modesty. They wanted to tell him of it, but no one dared, feeling much difficulty in bringing such a trifle to the notice of so grave and venerable a father.

They consulted about it, and the Abbot Pastor, a prudent and holy man, suggested an excellent means. He made it up with all the other fathers: "Let us do this: the first time we are all together, I will put myself in that posture, and do you rebuke me for it, and I will correct myself, and so he will take the hint." They all thought it an excellent expedient, and did so the next time they were together for spiritual conference. The Abbot Pastor took the same posture as Arsenius, and the old men rated him soundly for the want of modesty and the bad example which he showed; and he at once put himself in a proper attitude. Abbot Arsenius, seeing what passed in his neighbor, without seeming to do so, lowered his leg little by little; and history says that he took the admonition so well as never again to fall into that fault. So each one should take any public admonition and rebuke that they give to another. Hence also will be seen the difficulty that we said there was in correcting and admonishing another.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Rule and Constitution That We Have in the Society, of Discovering the Faults of Our Brethren Immediately to the Superior

THE Ninth Rule of the Summary of our Constitutions says as follows: "For their greater advancement in spirit, and especially for their greater humiliation and self-contempt, everyone should be content that all his errors and faults, and all things whatsoever may be observed and noted in him, may be made known to the superior by anyone who has knowledge of them out of confession." As a foundation of what we have got to say, it is well for all to know that, while all our constitutions are approved and confirmed by sovereign pontiffs—and there is put at the beginning of them the *motu proprio* of Gregory XIII, whereby they are

approved—this rule and constitution of fraternal correction received the particular approbation of the sovereign pontiff, and that as the result of a judicial inquiry, which sets it in a category by itself. For in Rome a priest who had been a member of the Society, and was dismissed from it as being a restless and mutinous spirit, printed a fragment of the “Summa” of Cardinal Toledo, and in it there was a chapter saying that a certain religious order, to which he wished well for the learned men there were in it, had their rules contrary to the Gospel (Matt. viii. 15), whereby faults should be discovered immediately to the superior without previous notice given to the delinquent, and this led to many awkward consequences. Father Everard Mercurian, who was then General, complained to the Pope; and his holiness desired to see the book and our rule, and took information on the way in which the rule was carried out in the Society; and thereupon declared that not only was the rule not contrary to the Gospel, but was very far from being open to such a false accusation, and contained in it evangelical and apostolical perfection; and he ordered that part of the book to be prohibited, as was done by Cardinal Sirleto, to whom that office appertained.

This was enough to justify the rule; but for our greater satisfaction and consolation, leaving scholastic disputation and argumentations to the schools, we will treat here of two things: first, the importance and necessity of this rule; and secondly, sundry reasons which show and declare how well founded it is in reason. As for the first, the importance and necessity of this rule will be understood from another very important rule that we have, of which we spoke in the last treatise, of giving an account of conscience to the superior. All the reasons and suitable motives that our Father alleges in the Constitutions in favor of each individual’s manifesting his conscience to the superior—all these reasons, I say, bear out this rule and show the importance and necessity thereof. These reasons we set forth in

that other place at length, and they may be reduced to two heads: first, to the end that superiors may be able to rule, direct, and cure; secondly, that so the superior may be able to ordain and provide better what makes for the good of the whole body of the Society. For these same reasons our Father judged that it was very important that the superior should be advised of your faults and defects by anyone who knew them out of confession. He wanted to have a surety in this matter, in case you should be neglectful of a thing to which you are bound, and which is so important for your good and for the general good of the Society. Thus your brother supplies for what you ought to have done, and were bound to do, according to your institute. All this makes for your greater good and that of the order, for our greater security in our ministries, and for preventing superiors from ever putting anyone in danger of spiritual shipwreck.

Under the second head many reasons may be given in confirmation and justification of this rule. Let this be the first, the practice that there is of it in other orders of ancient standing. In the order of the blessed St. Francis, they have the same ordinance that the Society has, that faults be told to the superior without previous warning to the brother that has committed them, as may be seen in the book entitled, *A Quiet Conscience (Serena Conscientia)*, Question 104. And in the general statutes, called "of Barcelona" because they were made in a general chapter of theirs held at Barcelona in the year 1451, it is said that, when any go out of the monastery, they must after their return tell the prelate of any serious things that have happened to their companions; and that whoever fails to do this shall be punished with fasts on bread and water, and other penances at the discretion of the superior. And the same is said in the most ancient statutes of the order, in the fifth chapter. And when St. Bonaventure was general of the order, in a general chapter, with consent of the whole chapter, this ordinance was confirmed and approved; and it

was enacted that any teaching to the contrary should be cast out of the order as pestilent and destructive of all regular discipline, and that anyone daring to teach it should be deprived of his books, and of active and passive voice, and even should be put in prison. And that it may be seen how ancient this teaching is, and how it has ever been the received practice among those who were aiming at perfection, Abbot Smaragdus quotes a decree of the abbots of old, Stephen and Paul, which speaks thus: "If anyone sees another doing or saying anything bad, and does not inform the superior at once without delay, let him understand that he is an abettor and accomplice in that sin, and it is as though he had sinned and done this thing; for he is not free from suspicion of complicity in a sin who, being able to remedy it, does not remedy it." And thereupon he quotes another decree, which says thus: "If anyone knows of another's design to fly from the monastery, and does not at once reveal it, without doubt he is partaker in his perdition, and let such a one be removed from intercourse and conversation with the rest of the religious until the other is brought back." Thus this is not a new thing, nor proper and peculiar to us, but very ancient and common to other orders. This religious usage is founded on the end and purpose of the precept of fraternal correction, which is the amendment and cure of my brother, which commonly may be hoped for through the superior and not through any private person.

The second reason by which this rule is justified, and shown not to contain any such rigor or difficulty as some imagine, is that what is enjoined upon us and practised in the Society is to tell the fault of our brother to the superior as spiritual father, that he may correct the offender with his fatherly charity and love; and that he who has fallen, or was on the point of falling, may rise and amend, as is also declared in the twentieth of the Common Rules, which says thus: "If anyone knows of any grave temptation of

another, let him warn the superior thereof, that he by his fatherly care and providence may be able to find suitable remedy." Thus the other's fault is not told to the superior as judge, nor in such a way as to enable him to proceed to punish it, but as to a father who may be able to improve and not hurt him, by the proper remedy being applied to his case, and the ill consequences being prevented that might ensue if the superior did not know and apply the remedy (Suarez, "De Poenitentia," sect. 4, p. 22).

Thirdly, this is confirmed by Father Master Nadal, a man distinguished for learning and virtue, with this good reason. We see, he says, in the Church of God, as well in ecclesiastical as in secular government, that for elections to offices inquiry is made into things very private, according to the nature and requirements of the office. This is not done as a first step to punishment, although something may be found that deserves it; but because I want to know to whom I am entrusting my church, or my house, or my property, or my soul. But in the Society all are eligible for missions, that being proper to our institute; for which missions is required a very solid, not a weak and frail virtue that may come to ruin and destroy the good name of the order. The superior, therefore, may inform himself and be informed of these private matters, and lay down this rule for it, that he may be sure not to make a mistake in a matter of such importance as this, a matter that so much concerns you and the whole order.

In the fourth place, that it may be seen how reasonably this rule is framed, let us put in the scales on the one side the harm that ensues to you from your fault's being told to the superior as to a father, and on the other the losses and inconveniences that come of its not being told; and see which scale weighs the heavier. The harm to you is a little shame, and a trifling loss of credit that you seem to yourself to suffer; but the harm that may and generally does ensue on the other side, when these things are not told

to the superior, is first of all the fact that the mischief remains to be remedied, and as it is not remedied nor checked, it is apt to grow, and even to spread and infect others. Moreover, the usual outcome is apt to be your disgrace and a note of infamy to your order, since after all, sooner or later, in one way or another, the whole matter comes out; and what might before have been remedied with a little holy water, if you had told it to the superior at the outset, as you should have told it, will now have to come to be dealt with by cauteries of fire and the surgeon's knife—I mean, dismissal from the Society—vastly more than a little shame and that slight loss of credit which you think you sustain by the superior's knowing your fault. So I say that not only is there nothing done against charity by discovering to the superior the fault of your brother, but there is an obligation of doing so, an obligation which you should scruple to neglect, an obligation so serious that it may amount to a mortal sin to neglect it; not by virtue of the rule, since our rules do not bind under sin, as we have said above, but for the gravity of the matter and the serious consequences and mischief that may and often do ensue, of which he is the cause who might have prevented them by giving notice in time, and did not when he should have done so. The blessed St. Basil says, exhorting hereto: "To hide your brother's sin and refuse to reveal it to the superior is nothing short of helping the sick man who is on his deathbed to die quickly." Sin covered up and dissembled is like an interior abscess, that spreads and spreads within till it reaches the heart and proves fatal. And as he would do us a good turn who should open the abscess and expel the poison locked in there, even though it cost us some pain; and on the contrary he would play the part of an enemy who under pretext of compassion should refuse to open the abscess and cast the purulent matter out, so, says St. Basil, he does not the work of a friend, but of an enemy, who cloaks over the fault of his brother, and refuses

to lay it open to the superior as to a physician and father, to treat and remedy it; this is like helping a man to die. St. Augustine, speaking on this subject, says: "Think not that it is ill done on your part when you reveal this to the superior; rather you would do ill in cloaking your brother's misdeed over. You might have corrected him, and by silence and dissimulation you let him perish. If he had a sore on his body, and wished to hide it for fear of the cautery, would it not be cruelty of you to keep silent about it, and a work of charity and mercy to reveal it? How much more so in regard of the inward sores of the soul?"

The dissimulation that some are wont to practise, by way of keeping what they call the law of men of honor, is no act of charity. There are some who take it for a point of honor and good breeding not to go with stories of other people's faults to the superior, and feel great repugnance to giving evidence against them, taking it to be a degradation; and they say they have no mind to go talebearing, nor to do harm to anyone, or get anyone into the superior's black books. This is not the spirit of religion, much less of the Society, but laws of the world, evil codices, secular cabals and cliques very prejudicial to religion. It is not talebearing, it is not doing harm to your brother; it is doing him good. The opposite course is doing harm to him and to the order. How can it be right or reasonable to be unfaithful to your order to please some particular person? To whom are you more bound, to this individual or to the order? To be "a close and safe man," and have a reputation for that, is a thing that one should take for an insult and a degradation; there is no degradation in being loyal to your order and keeping its rule. And St. Basil concludes: "Let none, then, conceal the sin of his brother, lest, instead of loving him and doing him good, he be the cause of his final ruin." Seek not, then, means of concealment to hide the malady and infirmity of your brother, but manifest it straightway to the physician whose office it is to

tend and remedy it, before it becomes incurable and calls for the cautery and the knife. This will be true love and true charity. In this way you will save your brother; in the other way perhaps you will contribute to his ruin.

These reasons, and others that theologians and saints allege, are sufficient proof that this rule is quite just and holy, even though the religious makes no renunciation of his right. Such renunciation is not made in other orders; but in the Society there is, besides what has been said, another particular reason, which is that anyone wishing to enter the Society has the rules given him, and a Summary of the Constitutions which he has to observe, where this rule is set down. And they ask him if he will be content to submit to these rules, and in particular in point of this very rule his consent is expressly asked to what is said in it. And every six months during the first two years of his novitiate, before he is admitted to his vows, the rule is once more put before him, and the same question asked. And the master of novices has a rule to explain to the novices more in particular the things in which afterwards they may find some difficulty, among which this rule is specified, and so it is done. And they say that they are content to submit to it for their greater spiritual good and their greater abasement and humiliation, as the rule says, which is another particular help to the further smoothing down of this difficulty.

It is certain that each one, when he enters religion, may for his greater perfection cede the right which he has in the matter, and consent to all his faults' being made known immediately to the superior, without his being first warned in private. Each man is master and administrator of his own honor and fame; and for his own good and spiritual advancement he may agree to lose it with the superior, or with whomsoever the superior wishes, so long as there is no particular circumstance which obliges him not to part with it, as it is certain that there is no such circumstance

in this case. As a man may lawfully reveal to the superior his sin, however grave and secret it may be, so also he may give leave to another to reveal it. This is what they do who enter the Society, by the consent which we have mentioned. The consent asked of them is to the doing of what is prescribed in the said rule, and they answer that they give it; which is nothing less than a cession of their rights. Supposing one in confession, or in confidence, tells me of a grievous sin, and I say to him: "To make better sure of a remedy, would you like or be satisfied that I should speak of it to the superior, he being a very learned and a very prudent man?" and he says, "Yes, I am satisfied," it is clear that by the tenor of those words he cedes the right that he had that his fault should be told to nobody, and that I acquire a right to be able to consult my superior about it.

Add to this the ordinary practice of this rule which the novices see in the Society for two years before they take their vows. This is notice enough to give them to understand that they have renounced their right in the matter, even though they were not told in particular and expressly that they renounce it. It is in the same way that the Carthusian monk renounces the natural right that he has to preserve his life by eating meat, by the usage there is of this in his order, although he does not say in particular and expressly that he renounces it—and that is a greater right than the right to reputation. Again, he who is ordained to the sacred order of subdiaconate renounces the right of marrying, and becomes bound by a solemn vow of chastity, although he does not make any such vow in particular and expressly. So our Father Francis Borgia, when he was General, replied to some provincial congregations in Spain, who asked him whether persons entering the Society renounced their right in this matter. And the General of the Society has the right to declare the meaning of our constitutions, as is stated in our bulls and privileges.

Finally, since the writing of the above, what we have said has been determined in the Sixth General Congregation, and ordered to be explained to the novices. And as is observed there, the general congregation has the privilege from the apostolic see of explaining doubtful points of the institute. The congregation there adds that those words of the rule, "by anyone who knows them out of confession," apply to things noted and observed by the giver of the information, and not to things which the persons involved impart to another in confidence by way of asking advice for their direction and aid.

Hereby are allayed all the difficulties and occasions of complaint that might occur, since *scienti et volenti non fit iniuria*—"to one who knows and is satisfied with the thing, no injustice is done." You were told, to start with, when you were received, that such was the practice here, and you said that you were glad to submit to it. If since then you resent and feel aggrieved at your faults' being told to the superior, do not throw the blame on the rule, nor on your brother who keeps it; do not complain of that, but of yourself, that, whereas now you ought to have more virtue and humility than when you first began, you have less, since you are no longer in the state of mind in which you then were. This is the whole hub of the difficulty which some make about this rule; and so our Father puts in the text of the rule that foundation which is necessary for its support, which is humility and desire of spiritual advancement. If we had that, we should rejoice at others' knowing our faults, that we might be held in less esteem; how much more in being corrected and admonished for them! Little humility and virtue can he have, who has not enough even for this.

CHAPTER VII

Sundry Important Warnings in This Matter

FROM what has been said we may gather sundry warnings, as well for him who is corrected as for him whose duty is to correct and admonish. First, for him who is corrected and admonished, it must be observed that it is a great fault, and argues great imperfection, when upon the superior's rebuking or admonishing anyone of any defect, the man resents the admonition, and thereupon goes up and down inquiring who has told the superior, and whether he has told more, or exaggerated the thing much; and takes to complaining afterwards and offering excuses to this person and to that, making out that this thing was not so, or that it was not so bad as was represented. That is a great fault, and often does more harm and gives greater disedification than the original delinquency. We all know well and acknowledge that "I am a man and have my faults;" but when a person resents things in this way, we judge him to be very imperfect, showing as he does much pride, and giving occasion for our suspecting him of having no mind for amendment and spiritual improvement, but caring only to have an easy time of it and stand well in public regard and estimation.

St. Bernard says very well: "As for him who seeks to throw a veil even over the faults in which they catch him, and perhaps tells a smart lie to excuse them, how shall I believe that he will reveal the secret faults which he alone can know?" The truly humble man, who knows himself and takes himself for what he is, is not astonished at anything they say of him, nor is it anything new to him, since he always knows of greater faults in himself and thinks what they say little in comparison with what there was to say. To your mind, your fault seems less than it is, and sometimes no fault at all, because you see it with eyes

blinded by self-love; but your neighbor, viewing it with dispassionate eyes, sees it in a different light. But suppose a case in which your accuser has been guilty of exaggeration, stating the matter as it appeared to him, do you not remember that, when you entered religion, they asked you if you would be content to suffer injuries and false witnesses and affronts from people within the house and from people outside, and you answered Yes? How is it that you have now forgotten and repented of your profession? You should have been glad of your accuser's, with the best will in the world, saying more than what happened; and even though it be that it was not with a good intention, or any kindly feeling that he said it, you should still have rejoiced for what concerns yourself, even your greater humiliation, and over your being made like to and imitating Christ, our Lord. How much more, when it is said with a good intention, and you feel that he speaks the truth in what he says, and meaning your good, should you not be glad? In this way you gain more with men, and with God likewise; in the other way, when you think to gain, you lose.

Much greater would be the fault if, lighting upon him who might have given the information, you were to go the length of telling him so, and complain because he spoke, or because he said too much, or told the story in another way from what had occurred; or if you frowned or looked daggers at him, giving him to understand what was thought of him for what he had done. Anyone with a sincere desire of amendment and improvement would rather wish to have many eyes fixed upon him, to help and oblige him more to the perfection that he desires. Such was the desire of St. Bernard. He says: "Who will give me a hundred shepherds to be told off to keep me! The more I have of them, the greater the sense of security with which I go to pasture. O amazing folly! A man has no hesitation in gathering a multitude of other people under his keep, but cannot endure to have one watching over his soul. I fear more the teeth

of the wolf than the crook of the shepherd." That is what is to be feared, the wolf; but the precaution and pipe and care of the shepherd is not a thing to fear, but to desire. This is the good spirit; and, contrariwise, to resent there being eyes to watch and keep guard over you, besides being evil, is generally a sign of there being good reason to look after you with some care. And let this be observed also in other similar matters. We see by experience that they who complain of and resent their being carefully looked after, are just the persons who have most need of it, and by thus complaining they render themselves more open to suspicion. A good and humble religious finds more to fear in looking after himself than another can fear about it; and therefore he finds matter of rejoicing when they help him in this case, since it is his business that is being furthered, and he it is that is concerned in it.

On the part of him whose office it is to give the admonition, it is necessary to observe in the first place that the revealing of your brother's faults must be to the superior immediately, without other roundabout processes; as to a father, and under such secrecy as the fault requires, that he as a father may apply the remedy and prevent the mischief that might thence arise. This should be carefully taken notice of; for sometimes it may happen that a man will not tell the faults to the superior, and will tell them to a private person, who has no means of remedying them. That would be very ill done, because it would be detraction.

Secondly, as regards the mode of procedure in this manifestation, the rule says that it is to be done "with due love and charity," words which gave great satisfaction to His Holiness Gregory XIII when he examined these rules. He who wishes to do the right thing here must look to it carefully that he be not moved by passion or envy, and that no indiscreet zeal prompt him to act hastily and represent the thing as of greater gravity than it really is, and tell a crooked story, or exaggerate things, making of a fly an

elephant, and going from particular to general, or putting forward as a certainty what is a mere suspicion and perhaps a fancy of his own brain. This makes much matter of scruple, and is the cause of great troubles.

Thirdly, it is to be observed that whoever gives the admonition should not cease to do his duty even though the party admonished does not do his, nor takes the admonition in the right way. St. Augustine, arguing well that he who does not take correction properly is like a raving madman who resists physician and medicine, says: "What are we to do with him? Are we perhaps to cease working for his cure? No, by no means; for though the insane patient will not brook being tied or attended to, and although he who is suffering from a deadly sleeping sickness will not have them awaken him, nevertheless the diligence of charity insists on binding and tending the one and awakening the other. Both seem to be offended, and take it for a trouble and a grievance, while their malady is on them; but afterwards, upon their recovery, they are grateful for the benefit and good turn that has been done them"—*Ambo offenduntur, sed ambo diliguntur; ambo molestantur; quamdiu aegri sunt, indignantur, sed ambo sanati gratulantur.*

Thus we are to hope that our brother also will behave, although at the time when the admonition is given him he resents it; but when he is himself again, and thinks the matter over by himself and in presence of God, he will come to see reason, and acknowledge and be grateful for the benefit done him. Even brute animals, however much they resist, are at last broken in by men, with much trouble and sometimes danger to their keepers. Of them no gratitude is to be expected, because they have no understanding for that. But how much more is it to be expected, says the saint, that we shall succeed in curing and correcting our brother, that he perish not everlastingly. After all, he has understanding, and will be able in time to recognize facts, and be grateful for the benefit done him, according to the

saying of the Wise Man: *He will find more gratitude who correcteth his neighbor than he who deceiveth him with flatteries* (Prov. xxviii. 23).

St. Basil quotes to this effect the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians (II Cor. ii. 2): *And who is it that gladdeneth me but he whom I make sad?* This pain and sadness that you conceive upon correction gladdens me, because I see that it is to end in good. What for the present gives pain is a cause of health, because it makes me careful and diligent in future. It is *a sadness according to God* (II Cor. vii. 11), because it is cause of amendment. But, you will say, there are some who get worse for correction and admonition. To this, St. Augustine well replies: "Are we, then, to drop medical treatment and cease to tend the sick because some are not cured by it? No, surely not. Neither, then, should we omit correction because some do not profit thereby. The physician, whether spiritual or corporal, must do what in him lies and what his art teaches him, and not at once throw the case up, but use and try the means at his disposal."

Concerning the method to be employed in correcting, St. Basil says that he who corrects another ought to imitate physicians, who are not angry with their patient, but all their contention and indignation is against the sickness, and to that they devote their applications and remedies. So he who corrects another ought not to be angry or irritated with the sinner, but give all his care and attention to vanishing the defect and vice from the soul of his brother. And the way he should take herein, says the saint, should be that which a father who was a physician would take in treating a son for a wound or painful sore: see with what tenderness, gentleness and kindness he would treat him; in short, he is like one who feels his son's pain as his own. In this same way, then, with this tenderness, gentleness, and kindness should the superior correct his subjects, his spiritual children, *in a spirit of gentleness*, says St. Paul (Gal.

vi. 1). The persecutor who hacks men to pieces, and the executioner who quarters them, says St. Augustine, take no thought of hitting upon joints, or where their knife will pass better; but the surgeon, operating on a patient, considers first where he should cut, and goes about it with much delicacy and caution, because his object is to heal, and not to hack to pieces. This is the way the superior should go about it who wishes to heal his subject by correction and admonition, not to give him pain and do him harm.

This is a thing of great importance, earnestly inculcated by the saints. Let him who corrects another, they say, be greatly on his guard against any display of passion, anger, or indignation, for that will be the ruin of the whole business; it will not cure or amend the delinquent, but make him worse. And they quote that saying of the Apostle: *The servant of God should correct with meekness them who resist the truth* (II Tim. ii. 25). *With meekness*, though our version says *with modesty*, but it all comes to the same; for in order to correct with modesty, you must make no display of passion or excitement. Finally, the correction must be done with a kind air and gentle mien, and with a gracious countenance, so that the person corrected may understand that it springs from motives of affection and charity and desire of his welfare, for in that way it promises to be productive of much good.